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Author:
Reddy, Srinivas G.

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Advisor(s):
Hart, George L.

Committee:
von Rospatt, Alexander, Ram, Harsha

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By

Srinivas G. Reddy

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Committee in charge:

Professor George L. Hart, Chair
Professor Alexander von Rospatt
Professor Harsha Ram

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The *Āmuktamālyada* of the sixteenth century Vijayanagara monarch Kṛṣṇadevarāya is a poetic masterpiece of the highest order. It stands out as a landmark in Telugu literary history, not only for its poetic beauty, but also because of the unique religious and political themes embedded within its central narrative. Unlike most contemporaneous Telugu poets who based their works on Sanskrit *purāṇas* or other Indo-Aryan mythological sources, Kṛṣṇadevarāya turned to the southern Tamil tradition for his inspiration. The *Āmuktamālyada* is in essence a richly poetic hagiography of the Vaiṣṇava poet-saintess Āṇṭāḷ, or Goda as she is referred to throughout the text. And unlike the great *kāvyas* of Sanskrit (or even most coeval sixteenth century Telugu *prabandhas*) that often centered around male heroes, *Āmuktamālyada* tells the story of an adolescent Tamil girl in love with god. The notion of a female protagonist was surely common to Tamil epic literature, as in the famous *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimekalai* and *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. This geo-cultural shift by Kṛṣṇadevarāya evidences a marked reorientation of the Telugu tradition towards the South, not only in terms of literary source materials and *bhakti* related themes, but also in a very concrete political sense as the power center of the post-Vijayanagara state system moved to the Tamil country.

Both the themes of regional vernacularization and *bhakti* related transformations are framed by the poet-king's lived political life and his ambitious poetic imagination. In many ways Kṛṣṇadevarāya exemplifies the old notion of a *kavi-rāja* or poet-king; a ruler who could unite both statecraft and literature into a composite expression of kingship. The unique importance of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's work is therefore best understood when the text is placed within the historical context of the king's political agenda and the sweeping changes that he brought about, leading to both the apex and ultimate demise of the Vijayanagara empire. In this sense, *Āmuktamālyada* is a significant textual representative of the layered developments within South Asian literary and cultural history writ large. Composed in the early sixteenth century by one of South Asia's most celebrated monarchs, the ornate long poem of some 875 difficult verses brings together several diverse themes that coursed through the heart and mind of the multi-faceted poet-emperor, as well as his vast and diverse empire.

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Introduction

The *Āmuktamālyada* of the sixteenth century Vijayanagara monarch Kṛṣṇadevarāya is a poetic masterpiece of the highest order. It stands out as a landmark in Telugu literary history, not only for its poetic beauty, but also because of the unique religious and political themes embedded within its central narrative. Unlike most contemporaneous Telugu poets who based their works on Sanskrit *purāṇas* or other Indo-Aryan mythological sources, Kṛṣṇadevarāya turned to the southern Tamil tradition for his inspiration. The *Āmuktamālyada* is in essence a richly poetic hagiography of the Vaiṣṇava poet-saintess Āṇṭāḷ, or Goda as she is referred to throughout the text. And unlike the great *kāvyas* of Sanskrit (or even most coeval sixteenth century Telugu *prabandhas*) that often centered around male heroes, *Āmuktamālyada* tells the story of an adolescent Tamil girl in love with god. The notion of a female protagonist was surely common to Tamil epic literature, as in the famous *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimekalai*.[1] This geo-cultural shift by Kṛṣṇadevarāya evidences a marked reorientation of the Telugu tradition towards the South, not only in terms of literary source materials and *bhakti* related themes, but also in a very concrete political sense as the power center of the post-Vijayanagara state system moved to the Tamil country.

Both the themes of regional vernacularization and *bhakti* related transformations are framed by the poet-king's lived political life and his ambitious poetic imagination. In many ways Kṛṣṇadevarāya exemplifies the old notion of a *kavi-rāja* or poet-king; a ruler who could unite both statecraft and literature into a composite expression of kingship. The unique importance of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's work is therefore best understood when the text is placed within the historical context of the king's political agenda and the sweeping changes that he brought about, leading to both the apex and ultimate demise of the Vijayanagara empire. In this sense, *Āmuktamālyada* is a significant textual representative of the layered developments within South Asian literary and cultural history writ large. Composed in the early sixteenth century by one of South Asia's most celebrated monarchs, the ornate long poem of some 875 difficult verses brings together several diverse themes that coursed through the heart and mind of the multi-faceted poet-emperor, as well as his vast and diverse empire. As Hart and Heifetz have rightly suggested:

> South Asian culture is essentially syncretistic. Its writers and thinkers tend not to attempt to create a coherent system by discarding earlier cultural elements that do not fit in with their ideas but rather to synthesize everything that has gone before, throwing away nothing but rather subordinating everything to the idea or point of view that they wish to advance.[2]

As a thematically polyvalent text, *Āmuktamālyada* encompasses several productive topics that allow for multiple readings and interpretations. As such, this investigation will explore how

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[1] See also Hart 1975: 104.
[2] Hart and Heifetz 1988: 26.

a singule text can embody and exemplify critical developmental trends in the history of South Asian literature, religion and politics; and more importantly, the inextricable nexus of all three cultural elements.

The text is well suited for this endeavor, not only for its rich poetic content but also its crucially important provenance. It was composed in the early sixteenth century – the apex of vernacular literary production in the Deccan – and stands as a historical marker from which to look back at the literary developments that gave rise to such a remarkable piece of synchronic literature. Originating from the Deccan, the geographic heartland of South Asia, the text aids in better understanding the productive interactions that were percolating for millennia in the dynamic region. The two most dominant geo-cultural formations of the subcontinent – the Indo-Aryan North represented by Sanskrit, and the Dravidian South exemplified in Tamil – were co-mingling in a Deccani cultural confluence that was in many ways responsible for the characteristic vibrancy of South Asian literature and religion for over a millennium, from roughly 500 CE to 1500 CE.[3]

Āmuktamālyada was written at a time that was (and still very much is) viewed as an apex of imperial peninsular power, as well as a *suvarṇa-yuga* or Golden Age of Telugu literary production. As much as the text allows for a look back into historical trends concerning language and power, it equally presents a lens to look forward into the fascinating paradigmatic changes actuated by a developing sense of South Asian modernity. The vast 'empire' of Vijayanagara, and even more so its 'synoptic great king' Kṛṣṇadevarāya represents a transitional moment in the political history of South Asia, teetering as it was on the brink of incipient colonial transformations. The poet-king seems to have had one foot in both worlds, like a giant who was straddling climactic developments that would lead to the new socio-political formations of the post-Vijayanagara Nāyakas, as well as new literary forms in Telugu which they sponsored like *yakṣa-gānas* and *kṛtis*. In essence, the pivotal and iconic reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya allows us to analyze a particularly dynamic period of South Asian history through the lens of a uniquely innovative literary work.

Chapter I explores Telugu's position, both linguistically and geo-culturally, as a hybrid of Sanskrit and Tamil, and places *Āmuktamālyada* in the context of Telugu's emergence as a regional language of political and aesthetic expression. Chapter II focuses on the text's central religious underpinnings which draw heavily on the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, and in particular, the *bhakti* modalities of the historical Āḻvār saints. Chapter III is an investigation into Kṛṣṇadevarāya's dual role as a mighty potentate and a talented poet. Included therein is a detailed historical analysis of the king's political poems and a persuasive determination of his independent authorship. In Chapter IV, the highly stylized poetics of Telugu *prabandha* evidenced throughout the text are analyzed in relation to modes found both in Sanskrit *kāvya* and Tamil *bhakti*. And lastly, Chapter V presents a selected translation of poems from all six chapters of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *Āmuktamālyada*, along with accompanying annotations. As a whole, I hope to explore how a remarkably creative work of regional literature, written by an equally fascinating poet-king, illuminates as well as evidences the rapidly transforming cultural and literary landscape of the pre-modern Deccan.

[3] For a good introduction to North vs. South generalization see Hardy 1983: 119 – 121.

Ancient Indian Literature

Āmuktamālyada is a fine exemplar of the highly developed idiom of classical Telugu and draws both thematic and poetic inspiration from the two great classicisms of South Asia. As such, any analysis of this highly synchronic text must be contextualized by understanding the relationship between Indo-Aryan Sanskrit and Dravidian Tamil, as well as the subsequent influence of both these classical traditions on the regional languages of South India. As broad as these ethno-linguistic categories may be, there is no denying the historical verities that substantiate such a general bifurcation. Furthermore, the use of these classifications has become so endemic to the field of South Asian studies that any analytic research into this area of study must at least begin with these preexistent categories. The present study does in fact invoke these large cultural formations in so much as to highlight the ways in which they were not only interacting, but also mutually influencing the paradigm of each in a productive and cyclical mechanism of cultural exchange.

More than thirty years ago George Hart quoted Vincent Smith's 1958 *Oxford History of India* stating that "Early Indian history, as a whole, cannot be viewed in true perspective until the non-Aryan institutions of the South receive adequate treatment. Hitherto most historians of ancient India have written as if the south did not exist."[4] And although most South Asianists today understand the general significance of South India as a geo-cultural entity, scarcely any research has gone into the holistic understanding of interactions between North and South. Studies relating to this kind of North-South interaction have been rare because they require knowledge of both Sanskrit and Tamil.[5] Unfortunately the Western field of South Asian Studies has been dominated by the study of Sanskrit, leaving classical Tamil grossly underrepresented.[6] Moreover, the majority of studies within each of these scholastic divisions have remained sorely non-dialogic.[7] In other words, the North and South have remained academically isolated, an unfortunate reality that belies the inextricably linked cultural histories and cross-fertilized linguistic productions of both domains – an ongoing synchronic process that inspired but also defined pre-modern textual productions like Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *magnum opus*.

In essence, I believe, for reasons that will be made clear throughout the forthcoming chapters, that a panoptic understanding of *Āmuktamālyada* must be rooted in an exploration of the relationship between the classical languages of Tamil and Sanskrit; and furthermore, that an exegetical analysis of the text will reflexively throw light on the interaction between these two dominant classicisms of South Asia.

[4] Quoted in Hart 1975: 1.
[5] The only significant contribution to this line of analysis has come from scholars of South India, and particular George Hart's 1975 *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts*.
[6] In 1975 Hart could remark that "this important culture has been neglected by scholars, who have largely been unaware of its existence." Hart 1975: vii
[7] cf. Bakhtin in the *The Dialogic Imagination*.

Dravidian Studies

janani samskṛtambu sakalabhāṣalakunu deśabhāṣal' andu tĕnugu lĕssa
jagati talli kae saubhāgya-sampada mĕccuṭ' āḍubiḍḍa melu kāde[8]

Sanskrit is the mother of all languages, but Telugu is the best regional language.
Though the mother of world is praised for her auspiciouness, isn't the daughter better?

Much of the difficulty in exploring the large geo-cultural forms and processes of South Asia has been a lack of suitably applicable theoretical tools of analysis. In other words, South Asianists, as well as other Area Studies scholars have long found theoretical and philosophical apparati in the highly westernized, Judeo-Christian sensibilities of European intellectuals. There certainly are theories that have analogous applicability in both South Asia and Europe[9], but it seems imperative that any tradition be first and foremost analyzed on its own terms, that is to say by native scholars and theories. And although many traditions may lack such theoretical devices, South Asia is indubitably replete with them. In particular, the theoretical systems formulated in the fields of linguistics, grammar, poetics and aesthetics, by both the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions, offer rich modes for literary analysis.

In so much as there exists a large native corpus of literary theory in South Asia, this material must be in a sense translated, or rather made accessible, to the larger English-writing and speaking academic community. One such contribution to this line of theorizing is Sheldon Pollock's 2006 *Language of the Gods in the World of Men* a sweeping master narrative of language, culture and power in South Asia. And although Pollock has done a monumental job in establishing a framework to discuss the expansive domain of political potency that Sanskrit (both linguistically and culturally) exerted for over a millennium throughout most of South and Southeast Asia, he has sadly neglected the important contributions that Tamil, and Dravidian culture in general, have made to Sanskrit's vibrancy. Any large theoretical endeavor such as this, covering as it does a vast geo-historical expanse (three continents, countless languages and over three millennia), is bound to have areas that warrant nuancing or adjustment. Many of Pollock's important theoretical ideas are well presented and argued, including his critical explanation of the cosmopolitan vernacular which generally fits the history of Telugu quite nicely. Given these important contributions however, it is unfortunate, though quite understandable, that he is dismissive of the fact that ancient South Asia is home to not just one, but two, classical languages – both of them literate and literary from the early centuries of the first millennium CE and demonstrably expressive in terms of defining distinctive cultural and political domains.

In general, the study of Sanskrit, as diverse as it may be, embracing various epochs, literary contexts and scientific discourses, remains sadly sealed off from various lines of inquiries that involve the use of other languages. The one notable exception to this generalization is found in the study of Buddhism, a field that continues (and increasingly so) to deploy a multilingual methodology of exegetical inquiry. Quickly however the study of Buddhism became its own special discipline, separating this approach from inquiries into 'mainstream Hindu' literature in Sanskrit. The simple truth is that Sanskrit has almost always been studied in isolation. It is so vast and 'powerful' if you will that it requires no recourse to

[8] Vallabharāya's *Krīḍābhirāmamu*.
[9] Like vernacularization in the Latinate world of a similar epoch.

any second language. All the languages of South Asia are viewed in relation *to* Sanskrit rather than in a relationship *with* Sanskrit. Even Telugu, a Dravidian language, has always looked to Sanskrit rather than Tamil as its source, or as depicted in the verse above, its mother. This kind of linguistic isolationism is therefore not a new issue relating to modern academic inquiry, but rather quite an old and endemic problematic in the minds of South Indian vernacularizers.[10] For this reason in particular, *Āmuktamālyada* represents a marked and dramatic shift in literary orientation, and although Kṛṣṇadevarāya relied heavily on the Sanskrit poetic tradition, his thematic and aesthetic source was clearly Tamil. This shift reveals a more nuanced formulation of Sanskrit power – a hegemonic positioning of cultural currency that is not exerted unidirectionally but always in relation to, and in dialogue with, neighboring cultural formations.

Pollock's failure to recognize Tamil's classical language status is representative of a larger academic (one could even argue cultural) bias towards the Indo-Aryan classicism of Sanskrit and its traditions. Even though a scholar of Telugu could state: "Unlike Tamil, which had a secure and respectable past and sat by the side of Sanskrit as an equal, Telugu had to claim maturity by incorporating from the language of the gods…,"[11] such as statement is counteracted by opinions such as the following which claim Sanskrit's literary primacy and superiority: "It was only when the language of the gods entered the world of men that literature in India began."[12] One of the major critiques relating to the acceptance of Tamil's significance and contribution to early Indian literature comes from a perceived lack of historical dating, an issue that plagues all South Asian historical research to some degree or another, and is certainly not applicable to Tamil alone. Examples from Pollock's writing will illustrate the point: "disentangling fact from fiction in Tamil literary history is complicated", the "uncommonly obscure prehistory of Tamil literature", and "leaving aside the historiographically convoluted case of Tamil." In the end Pollock uneasily admits to Tamil's novel place in South Asian literary history when he states that an "element of complexity is introduced by a unique, and uniquely obscure, vernacular literary prehistory."[13] It is this very uniqueness that makes Tamil such a problematic issue for Pollock's grand scheme of a superpositional Sanskrit in relation to late-developing vernaculars. Simply put, Tamil does not fit into the vernacular vision that suits other languages like Kannada and Telugu. And in order to address this anomaly in his theory, Pollock does not explore the unique case of Tamil; rather, he dismisses it as complex and convoluted. Unfortunately, this convenient circumvention has closed Pollock's theories, which are in fact culminations of decades of Indological thought, from a more holistic and therefore more comprehensive framework of South Asian literary developments.

To better understand this interactive phenomenon, a brief exploration of the two great classicisms of ancient South Asia follows herein. This historical grounding will in turn set the stage for contextualizing the important process of vernacularization that gave rise to regional literary production, throughout the subcontinent, but more specifically first and foremost in the southern Deccan.

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[10] The argument could even be made that a proper understanding of premodern North India must be rooted in a foundational knowledge of both Hindu and Islamic traditions as well as Sanskrit and Persian.
[11] Narayana Rao 1995: 29.
[12] Pollock 2006: 75.
[13] Pollock 2006: 100, 292 and 383.

CHAPTER 1
Classicism and Regionalism

1.1 The Sanskrit Cosmopolis

Pollock's central premise is that Sanskrit was a sacred language primarily used for liturgical purposes until, at the beginning of the first millennium CE, it was increasingly, and to a great extent hegemonically, employed as a language of literary and political expression. Sanskrit would go on to maintain this pan-Indic position of linguistic/cultural primacy for an entire millennium until the beginning of the second millennium CE when regional languages were "dignified" and "literarized" so as to challenge, and later replace, Sanskrit as the dominant literary medium of poetic expression and power. The idea of a Sanskrit cosmopolis is an important contribution to understanding Sanskrit's fascinating, ubiquitous and non-militaristic cultural domination of South and Southeast Asia particularly in the first millennium CE. This well-evidenced construct represents a nexus of language, culture and power, and the inextricable way in which these factors combined to penetrate and influence a vast and varied geo-cultural area. As part of the process, socio-cultural ideas imbedded within the language were disseminated, thereby producing a high degree of cultural capitol, and in turn a medium of political discourse.

One critical factor that explains Sanskrit's ability to be so pervasive is its invariability over time and space. The forms and tropes of a seventh century Gujarati rock engraving may, and most probably did, look and sound identical to an eleventh century temple inscription from Thailand.[14] One reason for this was Pāṇini's great *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, a brilliant grammatical treatise that was prescriptive, rather than descriptive in nature, which is to say it was not codifying a living language, but rather providing codes for an expandable language. This makes Sanskrit trans-regional, universal and static – qualities that will find strong contrasts in the regional languages.[15] In so much as this linguistic universality allowed Sanskrit to flourish it also lead to the so-called obsolescence of expressive Sanskrit in the second millennium CE. The language was fixed, like petrified rock, and it seems to have became hard, brittle and easily breakable.

In truth, Sanskrit is not hermetically, nor even hermeneutically sealed. Its development as a language was intimately connected to the regions of diverse languages through which it so pervasively spread, and therefore, any holistic understanding of its literary historiography must be based in part, or at the very least, set in opposition to, modalities of production outside the cosmopolitan sphere. This point is well summarized by A. K. Ramanujan when he states: "Sanskrit, by its existence, expressed and confirmed a social organization of tradition that depended on a dichotomy between "great," pan-Indian elite traditions and many local, "little," vernacular traditions, with bilingual mediators between them."[16] In essence it seems imperative that there be an engagement with what Pollock somewhat dismissively, and categorically, calls the Folk.[17]

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[14] Pollock provides ample evidence of this fact; see especially the section on Sanskrit cosmopolitan forms in Southeast Asia.
[15] Contrast to *Tolkāppiyam*, see Section 4.1.
[16] Ramanujan 1993: 134.
[17] "If nationalists and other indigenists are predisposed to discover an ever-deeper history for the literature of the Folk, reaching back to a golden moment of pure autochthony, historical analysis shows that literatures typically arise in response to other literature *superposed* to them in a relation of unequal cultural power." Pollock 2006: 26.

Since Vedic times, the Sanskrit language has been significantly influencd by interactions with other languages both Indo-European and otherwise. These relationships have always been viewed as hierarchical polarities in which an established classical tradition meets a fluid folk idiom. In the Indian subcontinent, Sanskrit came into contact with the autochthonous languages of the Dravidian language family.[18] And though these native languagues would later borrow a great deal of Sanskrit vocabulary, there was a very clear two-way exchange of linguistic forms and sounds. In addition, it is not clear that Sanskrit's relationship with these other languages was hyperglossic, but rather more polyglossic. Pott, Caldwell, Emenau, Hock and others have cogently demonstrated the influence of Dravidian syntax and phonology on ancient Vedic Sanskrit. They cite Sanskrit elements which are unique to Indo-European but common to Dravidian, including the differentiation of dental and retroflex sounds, heavy lexical borrowing, the use of absolutives, and the post-positional quotative "iti" to name a few.[19] Pollock admits to this well-evidenced reality half way through his book: "The linguistic symbiosis of Sanskrit and local language in India is a complex topic not easily summarized, but there was certainly a history of convergence between them, both in phonology and lexicon. This history was continuous and began when Sanskrit began, for it is visible already in the oldest stratum of the Vedic corpus."[20]

A strict adherence to grammar, and a closed social monopoly on usage were ways to anchor the language and contain its 'corruption', or natural process of linguistic attrition. The fact that Sanskrit was always kept separate from one's mother tongue appears to be more of the reason to support its linguistic isolation, and of course its later expressive decline. Sanskrit was under control and always developed in opposition to the unbridled growth of 'family' languages. This also speaks to the high degree of multilingualism that existed in ancient India, a phenomenon that continues to this day. Therefore, as much as Sanskritic cosmopolis is argued to be "fixed" "pan-Indic" "eternal" and thereby somehow cosmic, this notion itself is rooted in a self-conceived and self-perpetuated notion of the Sanskrit language. It is clear that there are a plethora of regional manifestations, a rich variety of region-specific cultural formations, ambiguities and anomalies in morphology, vocabulary and pronunciation. Even Pāṇini himself mentions regional variation.

1.2 The Sangam Corpus

The ancient Sangam or *caṅkam*[21] literature of southern India encompasses a rich body of poetry and evidences a highly sophisticated literary tradition that, unlike the later literatures from languages like Telugu, was for the most part independent of Sanskrit influence. "The earliest corpus of Tamil literary texts may be dated roughly between 100 B.C. and 250 A.D,"[22] and

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It is exactly this "Folk" with the misplaced capital "F" that Pollock and others are so easy to dismiss and disregard. The process of language development is always a two-way process, a dialogue if you will, rather than a hegemonic superimposition by a so-perceived dominant linguistic/cultural formation upon a subdominant one.

[18] There is significant data relating to the presence of Dravidian languages like Malto in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, some pockets even continue to this day.

[19] For further information see Emenau 1974 and Hock 1996.

[20] Pollock 2006: 273.

[21] "the three Academies (*caṅkam*) at Maturai are said to have been permanent institutions which, under the patronage of Pāṇḍya kings, controled and criticized the literary output of entire Tamiḻnāḍu....." Zvelebil 1974: 12

[22] Zvelebil 1974: 9. "It is almost certain, then, that the six earliest Tamil anthologies were written in the first, second, and third centuries A.D., after the use of the old Brāhmī script, which was probably first adapted for Tamil

although Sanskritic elements were to some degree entering the South during this time, the more pervasive poetic, cultural and religious influx of Indo-Aryan concepts and mythologies would not occur until a few centuries later.[23] As Hart explains, "Tamil literature goes back to a period before northern literature had enough prestige in the South to be imitated there, and to a time before northern institutions were so strong that they brought with them northern words."[24] Although Hart is hinting at the idea of a developing Sanskrit cosmopolis, defined as it is by prestige and political power, it is quite clear that the Sangam poems exhibit an indigenous idiom expressive of a native South Indian culture. It is for this critical issue that the Sangam poems become a unique and productive source through which to understand South Indian and Deccani culture as it was prior to the elevation of a hegemonic Sanskrit formation, a force which seems to have crystallized during the celebrated Gupta Age. In addition, by isolating such 'pre-cosmopolitan' cultural strands, we may better understand how these essentially Dravidian elements mixed with, influenced, and ultimately created the new Sanskrit order of the mid first millennium CE.

The unique poetic quality of the Sangam poems is based on, or better said, in conversation with, linguistic and aesthetic structures outlined in the *Tolkāppiyam*, a massive literary compendium of indeterminate provenance. Whatever its exact dating maybe, it is clear that the *Tolkāppiyam* was a treatise of significant importance – it was not a thematically or compositionally unified work written by a single author, but rather a vast tome of grammatical, morphological and aesthetic principles composed over a period of centuries by multiple authors. That being said, internal evidence allows us to claim with certainty that parts of the great grammar are indubitably of some antiquity, dating back to the early centuries of the first millennium.[25] As a text, it is clear that the *Tolkāppiyam* is quite different from its Sanskrit analogue, but what is most interesting is the differing modes in which these two grammars were theoretically and practically conceived to function. The *Aṣṭādhyāyī* offers a comprehensive set of rules that demands that practice follow theory, that is to say new words or formations flow out of the prescriptive theories established by a preexistent grammar. But the very opposite seems to hold true for the *Tolkāppiyam* where theory is derived from practice, and additions are made to the grammar in response to evolving grammatical forms and innovative literary productions.[26]

This fundamental difference truly defined the 'rise and fall' of expressive literature in both traditions, a phenomenon that will be explored in greater detail in Section 1.5, and one that centrally involves an interactive give and take between both traditions. For the moment, it appears sufficiently clear that a very vibrant literary culture had developed in the early centuries of the first millennium in South India, a time when the Sanskrit epics were in wide circulation and the first proto-*kāvyas* were being produced.

In addition to a literary uniqueness, the societal values and cultural norms that find expression in these poems are quite different from the conventions found in Sanskrit. The early Tamils, and as will become evident, the early Deccani civilizations as well, centered their life around three important people: the king, women and low caste ritual specialists. These three groups were loci of *aṇaṅku* or potent sacred power that needed to be controlled by very specific

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during the reign of Aśoka (272-232 B.C.), had become standardized and after literacy in it had spread widely." Hart 1975: 9.

[23] cf. Section 2.1.

[24] Hart 1975: 12.

[25] See Mahadevan 1970, Hart 1975: 10, Ramanujan 1985, etc.

[26] As Zvelebil states, it is "evident that the *Tolkāppiyam* was preceded by centuries of literary culture." Zvelebil 1974: 34.

modes of behavior and ritual action. Though a detailed discussion of these ideas is not possible here, some of the ideas relating to early Tamil culture will be explored in Chapter 4. Suffice it to say that the ancient Tamils had a worldview that was quite different than that of the early Indo-Aryans; a divergence of cultures that I believe became productive in terms of the cultural synthesis in the Deccan of the mid first millennium CE.

1.3 Confluence in the Deccan

Given the fact that South Asia possesses not one, but two, great literary traditions of antiquity, it is important to explore how these two starkly different cultures interacted, mutually influenced each other, and most importantly enriched and reinvigorated South Asian literary production for centuries. The great North-South cultural confluence logically began in the Deccan, an arid, rocky area of south-central India that straddles the geo-cultural divide between these two formations. According to the research of George Hart this region, stretching all the way back to the megalithic era, was populated by fundamentally Dravidian peoples. And as such, the old Sangam literature "provides a window into pre-Aryan South India, as it was an integral part of a larger whole, the Deccani civilization that was spread from Tamil Nadu to Orissa and Maharashtra in the first millennium B.C. an area characterized by remarkable archeological uniformity."[27] This region was also the heartland of what was to become Telugu country, or as the Vedas themselves mention, the land of the Āndhras. This region, as well as its people and their culture, have therefore always been at the frontier of cultural syncretism, a continuous process that would be well-evidenced in the writings of South Indian vernacular poets like Kṛṣṇadevarāya.

The Sātavāhanas are the earliest imperial sovereigns that we know of from this region. They seem to have ruled in various capacities over much of south-central India from 225 BCE to 250 CE, almost half a millennium during which "a lineage of rulers who unequivocally saw themselves as inhabiting a Vedic world" never produced texts of documentary or literary nature in Sanskrit.[28] The primary language employed by these early Deccanis was Prakrit, and according to numismatic evidence, Telugu and sometimes Tamil as well.[29] The bilingual coinage of the Sātavāhanas represents therefore a clear indication that these Dravidian languages did in fact express an economically viable and politically meaningful representation of power, on par with a language like Prakrit, and completely separate from Sanskrit, which at that time was restricted to the sphere of liturgical usage. Soon however, Sanskrit would emerge from its Vedic confines and begin to be politically expressive. As Pollock explains: "no Prakrit whatever is to be found in royal inscriptions after the early fourth century…[except] the language practices of the Ikṣvākus, the ruling lineage of southeast Andhra that succeeded the Sātavāhana dynasty around 225 CE (and were themselves followed by the Pallavas within a couple of generations), are slightly asynchronous with respect to the disappearance of Prakrit…"[30] What is clear here is that the Deccan was a zone of convergence – localized Prakrit forms along with purely Dravidian languages were being replaced with Sanskrit as the dominant language of power. The language of the gods, so to say, was entering the world of men, and as we will soon see, the languages of men were entering a world of gods.

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[27] Hart 1975: vii.
[28] Interestingly, some of the earliest political prose-poetry in Prakrit is found among the early Sātavāhanas, cf. reference in Pollock 2006: 79.
[29] See Ray 1986: Monastery and Guild under Satavahanas
[30] Pollock 2006: 116.

One fascinating literary example which evidences this literary fusion is the famed Sattasaī of the Sātavāhana king Hāla. This collection of Prakrit 'folk' poetry is not a haphazardly thrown together anthology but rather a careful and deliberately compiled work of sophisticated poetic tropes and suggestive imagery. The king's authorship is doubtful (a theme that we will return to later in greater detail) and internal linguistic evidence based on other Prakrits (cf. Aśvaghoṣa of the second century) places the author between 200 to 450 CE. This dating sets the text between the early inchoate *kāvya* of Aśvaghoṣa and the masterful productions of Kālidāsa, a dating that directly suggests the importance of this Deccani literature on the poetic and thematic sensibilities of Sanskrit's finest poet.

The text is of critical importance because it is the earliest and clearest representative of a textual conduit that transferred Dravidian (specifically Tamil) poetic conventions, themes and words into Indo-Aryan.[31] As Hart describes: "in the *Sattasaī* many conventions and figure found in Tamil first appear in Indo-Aryan…the Sattasaī was written in Māhārāṣṭrī, the southernmost Prakrit, and that at least a part of it was composed under the Sātavāhanas, who ruled both Maharashtra and the Telugu country."[32] Mahadevan adds in his book *Tamil Epigraphy* that not only Tamil, but old Telugu as well, was being absorbed into the Prakritic fold: "The Gatha Saptasati…is said to contain about 30 Telugu words."[33] Hart's work goes into much greater detail and his analysis "suggests strongly that both Tamil and Sanskrit derived their shared conventions, meters, and techniques from a common source, for it is clear that neither borrowed directly from the other."[34]

What is paramount here is that this process of literary evolution was taking place in the Deccan, the heartland of Kannada/Telugu society, in a Prakritic form that was not only very well respected, but also exhibited a high degree of Dravidian influence. To summarize then, "It is of great significance that this southernmost of Prakrits was used in an area where Dravidian and Aryan languages came into contact, an area which even today is characterized by a mixture of North and South Indian customs, and in the Sātavāhana empire, which embraced Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, areas of Aryan and Dravidian speech."[35]

In the centuries to follow, Sanskrit literature would flourish in the hands of master craftsman like Kālidāsa, freeing the language from its religious confines and infusing it with a new sense of expressivity, both lyric and poetic. And although Pollock attributes the radical reinvention of Sanskrit to the influx of newly immigrant groups from the northwest – the Śakas (i.e. Indo-Scythians), the Kṣatrapas and the Kuṣāṇas – it would seem that this argument of alterity and newness applies just as much (and arguably more convincingly) to the influence of a southern Dravidian culture which was slowly integrating into the large political and cultural formations of the Deccan in the early first millennium CE.

1.4 Praise Poems

> *Praise restores us to the world again, to our luckiness of being. It is one of the permanent impulses in poetry.*[36]

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[31] Use of same or similar literary conventions like messenger poems, monsoon separation, etc.; "virtually the entire spectrum" of these conventions appear in Hāla's *Sattasaī*, see Hart 1976: 319. For two more factors – the Ārya meter based on syllabic instances and the technique of suggestion, see Section 4.6 and 4.9.
[32] Hart 1975: 173.
[33] Mahadevan in *Tamil Epigraphy*.
[34] Hart 1976: 320.
[35] Hart 1976: 320.
[36] Edward Hirsch in *Poet's Choice*. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2006: 11.

Praise literature is common to almost all literary traditions. In ancient South Asia the Tamil poets had a specific poetic landscape known as *pāṭāṇ* for the praise of kings, just as the old Indo-Aryans had *praśastis,* both inscriptional and written, to eulogize the king. Both forms were essential to establishing the essential linkage between poet and patron, and more fundamentally, literature and power. The panygeric mode is a fundamental one[37] and it seems only natural that Tamil *puṟam* poems and Indo-Aryan *praśastis* shared similar aspects and modes of expression. They often described the king's heroic might and valor, his generosity and fame, and his glowing beneficence and beauty. They also often depicted the destruction of his enemies and their women and lands, and the contrasting prosperity and bounty of his land and family.[38] Below is one early example of the *praśasti* form which includes several geographic references, much like the old *puṟam* poems.

> He who has made a vow – a vow he kept – to take no life except in battle…but never hesitates to strike an equal foe who faces him in combat; who rules as lord of eastern and western Ākarāvantī, Anūpa country, Ānarta, Surāṣṭra, Śvabhara, Maru, Kaccha, Sindhusauvīra, Kukura, Aparānta, Niṣāda, and other areas gained by his valor, and everywhere – town, market, countryside – is untouched by trouble from robbers, snakes, wild beasts, or disease…;who composes prose and verse, clear and pleasant, sweet and charming, adorned with figures of speech and stamped by proper use of language; whose body is beautiful and marked with most excellent marks and signs….[39]

This short passage highlights several reoccuring themes that were central to both traditions – the importance of marital valor in battle, the localization of power with geographic markers, the welfare of the king's people, the beauty of his body and his masterful poetic skill. Here follow two poems, one from ancient Tamil and the second from Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *Āmuktamālyada*, both of which exemplify these attributes of Indic praise literature.

> Destroying the land, your limitless army advances,
> with its swift horses peerless in battle,
> and it spreads out its shields like so many clouds,
> moving forward…
> From Cape Kumari in the south, from the great mountain
> in the north, from the oceans on the east and on the west,
> the hills, the mountains, the woods and the fields
> in unison utter their praise of you! You
> who protect us! You, who are descended
> from those who ruled the entire world…[40]

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[37] In "Making, Knowing and Judging," W. H. Auden states that "Whatever its actual content and overt interest, every poem is rooted in imaginative awe. Poetry can do a hundred and one things…but there is only one thing that all poetry must do; it must praise all it can for being and for happening." Also Rilke in Orpheus Sonnet 7 says "*Rühmen, das ists*!"– "To praise, that's it!"

[38] Praśastis also establish long genealogies, a technique much less common in the puṟam genre. "the standard praśasti style: the fixing of genealogical succession, the catalogue of kingly traits of the dynasty, and a eulogy of the ruling lord." Pollock 2006: 119.

[39] From the Junāgaṛh rock inscription of Rudradāman circa 150 CE, "a Sanskrit *praśasti* approximating *gadya-kāvya*, or art-prose" in Pollock 2006: 68.

[40] From *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 16 in Hart and Heifetz 1999: 13-4.

Endowed with the six traits of a mighty monarch
and tactfully employing the four modes of governance
you are the wisest ruler, wiser than all your advisors.
Lord of the Hills! Mount Malaya is your playground!
You marked Golden Mountain with your fame
and controlled gathering rain clouds
like a herd of elephants bound in chains.

You crossed the sea like a present-day Rāma
and befriended the Lord of Laṅka
becoming royal friends, like loyal swans
playing in the clear waters of the Copper River.
The genuine blessings of Agastya are with you
and even Lord Indra fears your thousand arrows.

With sacred incantations
you control an army of ghosts
like Śiva himself in royal disguise.
Raising the fish emblem banner in your capital of Madhura
you are the perfect sovereign of the Pāṇḍya empire![41]

In essence, praise poems were the "literary expression of political selfhood."[42] Through a literary medium, the king was able to define his territory, inspire his people, glorify his reign, spread his fame and express his political power. The nexus of word and power will be explored in specific regard to Kṛṣṇadevarāya later in Section 3.2 but it is clear from these examples that there was (from ancient times itself) a very fundamental and mutually constituting relationship between the political and the literary.

It appears that these two genres go back to a common, if not universal, source of poetic models and conventions. Pollock believes "…it is the language and style of Sanskrit political poetry gradually being domesticated to the ways of the Tamil world…a number of topoi familiar from Sanskrit praśasti discourse – the troped beauty of the king ("jewel lamp"), his martial valor, moral perfection and generosity – reappear here in local garb."[43] Why can this not be viewed as the natural evolution of meaningful modes of expression that have clear literary precedents in the early Sangam canon? All of the topoi listed here can in fact be traced back to local rather than superposed sources. And although a definite establishment of origins is almost impossible, the uncannily close correspondence of these conventions demands a view that is not hegemonic in quality, but rather dialogic – a theorization that accepts that the behemoth cosmopolis can and indeed was influenced by regional conceptions of culture, power and indeed, literature.

What can we learn from the fact that the so-called first Sanskrit *mahā-kāvya* was written by the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa at the court of the Indo-Greek king Kaniṣka? Simply, that the development of Sanskrit expressivity in the form of long poems, was not a linear development born from within the Sanskrit tradition itself, but rather a multivalent evolution that was strongly influenced by the contribution and participation of non-Sanskritized literary peoples, be they Scythians from the west or Tamils from the south. In fact, there are several areas in which there

[41] AM II.39, see also Note II.39.
[42] Pollock 2006: 14.
[43] Pollock 2006: 322.

seems to be common link between the Indo-Aryan praśastis and Dravidian puṟam poems. There is a high degree of correlation in terms of stock metaphors, poetic conventions and even, I would argue, tone and rhythm in its broadest sense. I am in no way arguing that the Tamil language was a mode of pan-Indic discourse but rather that Sanskrit drew a lot from this older substratum and absorbed many of it modes and functions as it grew to become the voice of political power throughout India and beyond.

The *praśasti* prose style is long and winding, filled with "conspicuous nominalization and phonological density," yet another indicator of Dravidian influence where long and complex metaphoric structures are built up serially without break. In fact there is evidence to show that the development of Sanskrit compounds (*samāsa*) are in fact a result of Dravidian syntax and grammatical formations.[44] Later when the non-Indo-Aryan languages absorbed Sanskrit literary modalities, the infusion was primarily in the realm of vocabulary, never syntax, or even grammar (no matter how much vernacular grammarians tried in vain to belie this reality). The *praśastis* were also still connected to a historical reality, and rooted in a "factual referentiality," thereby functioning as an intermediary form between the early *puṟam* poems and the more dehistoricized, geo-spatially ambiguous modalities of Sanskrit *kāvya*.[45]

The dominant and most representative literary genre of the classical Sanskrit idiom is *kāvya*: ornate poetry that is *of* and *for* the court. In other words, *kāvya* was literature written by sophisticated literati for the purpose of expressing (at least to some degree) an esthetics of power. The finest exemplar of this style is the great poet Kālidāsa who is purported to have lived during the fourth century CE and modeled his celebrated *Raghuvaṁśa* after his patron King Samudragupta. Kālidāsa's fresh and brilliant approach to *kāvya* certainly had precedents within the Sanskrit tradition itself, but there was something particularly unique and refreshing about his style. The reason for his distinctiveness seems to come from his acquaintance with the Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit tradition[46], where he found poetic source material in the same stock of conventions that spawned the Tamil poetic traditions.[47] As Hart clearly argues:

> "There is scarcely a verse in which some element cannot be found that can be traced back to the southern tradition. Kālidāsa's achievement was to use the southern elements in a fully natural and sophisticated manner and to combine them harmoniously with elements native to the North. He was, as far as I know, the first Sanskrit poet to do this. Partly because Kālidāsa was such a great poet and partly because he synthesized in such a perfect manner elements from the two preeminent cultures of India, his work set the standard for all future Sanskrit poetry…"[48]

It seems that the finest exemplar of Sanskrit classicism, the greatest poet of high *kāvya* poetry was in fact melding Northern and Southern conventions into a composite modality that would soon define the Sanskrit poetic tradition, and yet at the same time, deny and distance itself from

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[44] For further information see George L. Hart's "Syntax and Perspective in Tamil and Sanskrit Classical Poetry" in *South-Indian Horizons: Felicitation Volume for Francois Gros.* pp. 219-227.

[45] It is important here to make a distinction between the localized, geographically bound inscription and the presumably mobile written poem. The circulation of *kāvya*, especially among the later literati and royal elites, truly defined it as the vehicle of spreading this new aesthetic power. A discussion of writing and the advent of textual forms is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present discussion.

[46] "celebrated in the poetic encomia as the very embodiment of *vaidarbha* literature." Pollock 2006: 220. cf. Section 4.1.

[47] See Hart 1976: 328.

[48] Hart 1975: 279.

its Southern roots.[49] The importance and influence of this poet's contributions are echoed by Pollock's statement that: "There is certainly evidence that Kālidāsa's account [*Raghuvaṁśa*] fed back into the very inscriptional discourse that gave it birth, exerting its influence across the entire Sanskrit world within a few centuries of its composition."[50] This speaks directly to the expansive influence that Kālidāsa's poetry exerted throughout the greater Sanskrit cosmopolis, a style and modality that was new to the world of Sanskrit *kāvya*.

By judiciously merging the two preeminent literary traditions of the Deccan, Kālidāsa seems to have set a precedent for later writers like Kṛṣṇadevarāya who would, more than a millennium later, engage in a very similar project of literary integration. It seems that it was this very ability to synthesize that made these innovators such fine poets, a skill in harmonizing the new with the old, careful not to obliviate the latter and yet highly conscious to create something expressive and bold.[51] Unfortunately with great writers like Kālidāsa or Kampaṉ or Kṛṣṇadevarāya, who "set the standard," the bar is set so high that imitators fall short and the sophisticated exemplar is left to be just that, often engendering a decline, or rather transformation, of a literary tradition's trajectory.

1.5 Vernacularization

Vernacularization is defined as "the historical process of choosing to create a written language, along with its complement, a political discourse, in local languages according to models supplied by a superordinate, usually cosmopolitan, literary culture."[52] This formulation fundamentally links the evolution of a vernacular to its position as a subdominant 'pre-literary' tradition, and for many reasons Telugu general fits this distinction.[53] Telugus have always looked towards Sanskrit as a language of great literary, religious and cultural prestige. Even as Telugu literature grew and expanded into a full blown 'classical' tradition of great depth and richness[54], Sanskrit retained its superordinate position. Literary themes, tropes, root stories, meters and more were taken wholesale from the Sanskrit tradition and given a place of central importance. And even after several centuries, the notion of Sanskrit's literary domination could not be shaken by a matured vernacular tradition like Golden Age Telugu, let alone an ancient literary corpus like Tamil. It is in this regard that Kṛṣṇadevarāya's work stands out in such a unique fashion for it challenges this paradigm of Sanskrit superiority. In the meta-narrative prologue to the poem, the god Āndhra Viṣṇu appears to the Kṛṣṇadevarāya in a dream and after praising the poet-king's literary productions in Sanskrit[55], commands him as follows:

> *All of these works you wrote in Sanskrit,*
> *but is it impossible to compose poetry in Telugu?*

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[49]This synthesis can be seen in earlier forms with Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa, and earlier court poets like Aśvaghoṣa, but Kālidāsa is the most well integrated.
[50] Pollock 2006: 242.
[51] This was also why the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, as well will explore later, was such a revolutionary new statement, it was in fact a textual conduit of Tamil *bhakti* culture.
[52] Pollock 2006: 23. Or in words more culturally relevant: the cosmpolitan vernacular is "a vernacular aspiring to cultural dominance through the appropriation of features of a superposed language." Pollock 2006: 261.
[53] There is even a clear distinction made within the tradition between pan-Indic Sanskrit and the *deśa-bhāṣalu* or regional languages, or as we saw earlier, the relationship between a mother and her offspring.
[54] Note the usage of classical here which is in reference to the *marga/deśi* divide rather than the definition of classical used in the section on Tamil.
[55] cf. Section 3.3.

Create a great poem in Telugu for my pleasure![56]

By placing these words in the mouth of Lord Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇadevarāya is able to distance himself from his inner sentiments and thereby boldly express the idea that Sanskrit was no longer the primary language choice for political and aesthetic expressivity. A vernacular language like Telugu was now the best option to "compose poetry" and create an expressive "great poem."

Vernacularization is undoubtedly a process of choice, and as such, the beginning of any vernacular tradition is rooted in a self-conscious moment of historical decision making. The extent to which earlier vernacularizers were aware of their novel contributions and epistemic shifts is debatable but it is clear that they were conscious of inaugurating something new and essentially different. Here it is also important to bear in mind the degree to which many of these seminal moments of literary awakening were inflated and crystallized by a later tradition, looking back at itself and creating that salient point of origin.[57] For Telugu literary history, the generative moment of beginning is embodied in the poet Nannaya, the *ādi-kavi*[58] – progenitor of a powerfully new cosmopolitan vernacular style that was to define the idiom of classical Telugu. His seminal *Āndhra Mahābhāratamu* became the hallmark by which all subsequent Telugu poets would judge themselves. Beacuase a literary language is created and constituted through the production of texts, Nannaya's work set the standard for linguistic propriety, literary form and, as the tradition tells us later, grammar itself.[59] There is an old saying among Telugu poets that a word is only poetically admissible if it was previously attested to in Nannaya's original *Āndhra-Mahābhāratamu*.

Nannaya was the court poet to the early twelfth century CE king Rājarājanarendra of the Eastern Cāḷukya dynasty who ruled from Rājamahendrapuram, present-day Rajahmundry, on the banks of the Godavari River. Narayana Rao and Shulman offer some interesting insights into this king and speculate on the political impetus for Nannaya's great commission:

> Rājarājanarendra's rule was unstable; he was constantly embroiled in conflict with his half-brother Vijayāditya, the son of his father's Telugu wife (Rājarājanarendra was himself the son of a Tamil wife, Kundavai). It is not impossible that the factor motivating this Tamil king to patronize a Telugu work was his wish to make himself more popular among his Telugu-speaking subjects.[60]

In this regard it seems likely that Kṛṣṇadevarāya, who refers to himself as the King of Kannada, wrote a Telugu work that would speak to a greater part of his constituency, or at least his immediate courtiers and subsidiary lords.[61] The critical point here is that the vernacular

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[56] AM I.13.

[57] Narayana Rao and Shulman comment: "His mellifluous textures have no precedent in Telugu…in this sense, the traditional vision of Nannaya as the original maker of literature is justified." NRS 56. Many scholars, including Nagaraju believe that Telugu 'literature' started before Nannaya, maybe even five or six centuries before in inscriptional form. For a counterclaim that Nannaya was not proceeded by earlier poets, see Pollock 2006: 284, a stance that clearly leaves out the very likely option that texts were lost.

[58] The use of this term seems to be a very intentional mirroring of the tradition built up around Vālmīki as the *ādi-kavi* of Sanskrit poetry.

[59] For more on Nannaya's grammar and the later crystallizations made by Appakavi in the seventeenth century see Narayana Rao in Pollock 2003.

[60] NRS 55.

[61] AM I.14-15.

choice is a political choice. In essence, by composing in a vernacular, potentates and their poets could localize their political domains by defining newly emerging linguistically bounded lands and peoples.[62]

The choice of retelling the *Mahābhārata* was particularly geared to this regionalizing endeavor, a process found not only in Telugu but in Kannada literary genesis as well.[63] In the words of Pollock, the *Mahābhārata,* "preeminently a work of political theory…localizes a translocal narrative in the service of a new (or newly self-conscious) regional power formation."[64] In this way the mythic, universal world of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, along with its concomitant structures of political power, were grounded and adapted to region-specific notions of governance and kingship. Furthermore, beyond the political implications, local cultural practices were absorbed so as to be more regionally resonant. As Narayana Rao notes: "…what Nannaya or Tikkanna did in retelling the *Mahābhārata* in Telugu was to create a domestic *Mahābhārata*, transformed to a regional story of medieval south India, that could happen in any south Indian kingdom or, for that matter, any large joint family"[65] This is why, centuries later, the popular Telugu film adaptations from the *Mahābhārata* became so cherished by the Telugu people, they resonated not only at a high mythological register, but also at a very (and arguably more important) domestic, real-life level. Essentially it is this diglossic modality that enchanted audiences, a stylistic choice that was at the heart of Telugu the literary sensibility from its very inception. The functionality of a dual linguistic register will be explored in greater detail in regard to Kṛṣṇadevarāya's brilliant usage in *Āmuktamālyada*, but for now, it is important to understand that the distinction of register and regionality was a formulation indigenous to Sanskrit theory, and one that developed even greater resonance in the Telugu tradition.

1.6 Mārga vs. Deśi

The term *deśabhāṣā* or regional language is first mentioned in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* where it is listed as one of the three types of languages, the other two being Sanskrit and Prakrit. In an interesting parallelism, Bharata also offers a tripartite division for etymological categories: *samānaśabda* (identical), *vibhraṣṭa* (derived), and *deśi-gata* (regional). Beyond this he also includes another category called *vibhāṣas* or 'sublanguages'. The *deśabhāṣās* (seven in total) include examples like Magadhi and Shauraseni, all northern Indo-Aryan dialects, but none of the Dravidian languages. The *vibhāṣas* "used in drama" which are also seven in number include Dramila (Tamil) and Āndhra (Telugu). These simple lists underpin much deeper notions that there was contact, knowledge, interaction and literary usage of the Dravidian languages amongst Sanskrit writers.

In the Telugu context, *deśi* or regional is contrasted with *mārga*, the Way, or in other words, the proper and well-established norm of Sanskrit grammar and literary theory. Though

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[62] If vernacularization as Pollock claims "was not a necessary process but entirely elective and conditional," (Pollock 2006: 290) I would argue that socio-political changes at the turn of second millennium set the ground for such compulsions. The new vernacular elites were certainly conscious about the expression of political prestige via regional languages, but this decision seems to be placed before them by newly emerging political constituencies and more locally centered polities. Their choice of regional languages by early vernacularizes seems to be just as much an expression of political climate as polticial will.

[63] The Tamil Bhāratam, Pĕruntevaṉār's *Pāratavenpā*, is said to have been composed at the Pallava court of the mid ninth century king Nandivarman III. There is also believed to be a contemporaneous Pāṇḍya telling as well.

[64] Pollock 2006: 18, 27.

[65] Narayana Rao 1995: 27.

the term *mārga* has been used widely throughout the Sanskrit tradition[66], in the Telugu context it is always placed in opposition to *deśi*, a polarity that neatly matches the Sanskrit-Telugu/classical-vernacular positioning. What is most interesting for Telugu, is how these terms seem to have developed over time in regard to a self-reflexive position about the tradition.

Nannecoḍa, one of the earliest poets, possibly earlier than even Nannaya[67], states that Telugu poetry began as *deśi* under the patronage of the Cāḷukyas (a reference to Nannaya perhaps). He goes on to give a beautiful description of how these two modalities must work together in order to make fine Telugu poetry.

> Earlier, there was poetry in Sanskrit, called mārga.
> The Cāḷukya kings and many others caused poetry to be born
> in Telugu and fixed it in place, as deśi, in the Andhra land…
>
> … when ideas come together smoothly in good Tĕnugu
> without any slack, and description achieves a style,
> and there are layers of meaning, and the syllables
> are soft and alive with sweetness, and the words
> sing to the ear and gently delight the mind,
> and what is finest brings joy, and certain flashes
> dazzle the eyes while the poem glows like moonlight,
> and the images are the very image of perfection,
> and there is a brilliant flow of flavor,
> and both mārga and deśi become the native idiom,
> and figures truly transfigure, so that people of taste
> love to listen and are enriched
> by the fullness of meaning –
> that is how poetry works, when crafted
> by all real poets.[68]

Over time however, the *mārga* versus *deśi* division which once applied to Sanskrit and the regional languages was now a valid descriptor of stylistic variations *within* Telugu literature itself.[69] The court poetry of Nannaya was *mārga* in contrast to the 'indigenous' *deśi* style of Śaiva poets like Pālkuriki Somanātha.[70] This evolution of terminology is indication that the tradition was developing, and thereby encompassing a larger array of literature that was not confined to the court, but included poets who fell into the category of religious or devotional poets – the so-called *bhakti* poets who will be more fully explored in Chapter 2. At the same

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66 For the development of *mārga*, *rīti* or *vṛtti* as terms of varying connotation, see Pollock 2006: 204-207. This could be due to dramaturgical, non-dramaturgical and literary discourses synthesizing concepts and terminologies. *Mārga* and *rīti* appear to be interchangeable for sometime, until the latter centuries of the first millennium when *mārga* came to be favored in the South and *rīti* in the North.

67 A claim made by Manavalli Ramakrishnakavi, see NRS 67.

68 From the introduction to Nannĕcoḍa's Telugu *Kumāra Sambhavamu,* translated in NRS 69-70.

69 The regional internalization of the *mārga/deśi* divide in Telugu could be attributed to Śrīnātha who was very much responsible for domesticating high, courtly Sanskrit *kāvya*.

70 "In Telugu, cosmopolitan vernacularity was never seriously interrupted, the high style maintaining its vitality into the early modern period." Pollock 2006: 435. This seems to be because Telugu had bifurcated itself into the interiorized *mārga* and *deśi* registers early on, thus creating parallel literatures that would continue for centuries without significant breaks.

time, neither school could deny the fact that Telugu literary production was always a conscious blending of both styles. In this sense, the work of Kṛṣṇadevarāya again stands out because he had a unique ability to blend these styles in a natural way, adhering to the more aesthetic forms of Sanskrit *kāvya* but equally drawing on the raw emotionalism of Tamil *bhakti*.

1.7 Research Approaches

The stylistic variety within the vernacular traditions, encompassing (in a general sense) both courtly and non-courtly forms of literary production, puts into question the notion that vernacularization needs to be cosmopolitan, or in other words, originating and emanating from court centers. A closer look at the process motivates some basic questions, such as: – To what degree were regional poets appropriating and localizing well-established Sanskritic models of poetic expression? Was this process of literary appropriation the only modality by which vernacular literature was being produced? And even when this literary transaculturation was occurring, to what degree were these poets also drawing on their own regional sensibilities in terms of style, meter, conventions, and most broadly, poetic texture and tone? Pollock's cosmopolitan vernacular is well balanced by S. Nagaraju's study of early Telugu epigraphy in the Rayalaseema region of southern Andhra. These earliest examples of Telugu inscription date to the sixth century CE and are found mostly in the southernmost district of Cuddapah, an arid region devoid of rule by early medieval empires like the Cāḷukyas or Pallavas. Nagaraju's research reveals that inscriptions move slowly from these outlying areas, only to appear in the more densely populated, agricultural region of Andhra proper, half a millennium later in the eleventh century. [71,72] In this model, the literary precursors to Nannaya were local kings in outlying areas who were never deeply influenced by the behemoth powers of the Sanskrit cosmopolis embedded in expansive imperial formations.

Another critical point to explore is that "vernacularization was a southern Indian innovation"[73]. Kannada and Telugu had well established literary traditions centuries before Marathi, Gujarati or even Hindi. Why then did Dravidian vernacularization occur at a different rate than their northern counterparts? Was it because they inhabited different geo-political terrains? Or could it be because the Dravidian languages were drawing on another large linguistic/cultural formation from the Tamil south. The essential point is that there was something unique occurring in the South at the turn of the second millennium. Sadly however,

> "the history of south Indian philology, to say nothing of its comparative history, is still very much in its infancy in the West, and many questions concerning the wider conversation among Deccani and peninsular intellectuals that may have taken place during the early centuries of vernacularization remain, not only unanswered, but even unasked."[74]

One important step in elucidating this process is to develop a greater sense of linguistic integration in South Asian research models. As I have argued earlier, Sanskrit, Tamil or even a language like Telugu is too often studied in isolation rather than in conversation with other

[71] Nagaraju 1995: 10.
[72] The epigraphical record indicates that the number of Sanskrit loan words in Telugu inscriptions nearly doubled in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the period just before Nannaya's landmark innovation. Pollock 2006: 381.
[73] Pollock 2006: 295.
[74] Pollock 2006: 364.

literary traditions. In the case of Telugu, the study of Kannada literary history is of particular salience. First off, there is a striking similarity between the received literary histories of both traditions. Like the Telugu *kavi-traya* of Nannaya, Tikkana and Ĕṟṟapragaḍa who composed the *Āndhra Mahābhāratamu*, so too Ponna, Pampa[75] and Ranna composed a Kannada *Mahābhārata*, both analogously ushering in the moment of a vernacular literary awakening. Later on, by the time of Vijayanagara ascendancy there was brilliant sense of multi-lingualism that permeated the court and its poets. Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada works were well patronized and master poets like Bhīma Kavi, Piḍuparti Somanātha, Nīlakaṇṭhācarya, and the famous Dhūrjaṭi were all polyglot writers who composed in several languages.

Even more crucial to such research, however, is an investigation into the early Vīraśaivas and later Śrīvaiṣṇavas, and their collective influence in both Kannada and Telugu speaking regions. The importance of these non-courtly *bhakti* poets reveal that the process of vernacularization in the South was intimately connected to another extremely important socio-religious process that was spreading north from the Tamil country. The "great many-sided shift"[76] of *bhakti* and its crucial dovetailing with vernacularization, new literary forms, and a highly energized mode of devotional expressivity will be the subject of the next chapter.

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[75] In fact, Pampa seems to have worked in Vemulavāḍa in what is today the Karimnagar district of modern Andhra Pradesh under a local ruler named Arikesari II, a Cāḷukya tributary. Additionally he may supply a link between these two traditions as he appears to have been from a Kannadiga Brahman family who migrated from the western Bādāmi Cāḷukyas to the newly established eastern branch in Veṅgi region of coastal Andhra, the exact locale where Telugu literature would begin with Nannaya's commission by Rājarājanarendra.

[76] Early *bhakti* is a "great, many-sided shift [that] occurred in Hindu culture and sensibility between the sixth and ninth century," a model of cultural information that implies that "the shift is systematic, begins in a small way, in a particular locality or even community, and slowly spreads from there in waves, depending on various conditions; the innovation does *not* universally *replace* the older forms, but develops a parallel existence that may come to dominate, cross, and transform the relevant…" Ramanujan 1993: 103.

CHAPTER 2
Shift to Bhakti

2.1 The Power of Bhakti

During the mid first millennium CE the Pallava empire held sway over much of the Tamil country. These northern potentates, possibly Gupta subordinates, brought with them many cultural, literary and mythological concepts from the Indo-Aryan cosmopolis, thereby inaugurating a pervasive influx of northern cultural elements into South Indian life.[77] This period marked the great coming together of the two major classicisms of India, that of the imperial Guptas and classical Tamil poetry. The result of this dynamic meeting was the development and rise of *bhakti*, a new modality of poetic expression that adopted, combined and ultimately synthesized both traditions. It has been suggested by Hart, Ramanujan and others that *bhakti* is the "meeting of Sanskrit religion and mythology with Tamil conceptions of women and kings."[78] And in specific regard to the Vaiṣṇava Āḻvārs, Hardy adds:

> "Kṛṣṇa emotionalism constitutes the result of Northern stimuli fertilizing the autonomous Tamil cultural and religious scene and producing what might be called a new religion....the character of intellectual *bhakti* was completely transformed under the influence of a regional, vernacular religion."[79]

As part of this cultural confluence the old Sanskrit gods underwent a transformation of localization, or in other words, a reorientation of celestial and geographically ambiguous religious forces to the earthly and regionally specific. The god Viṣṇu moved from a celestial home like Vaikuṇṭham to a very real locale like the Vĕṅkaṭa Hills.[80] This process of localization appears to be intimately connected to, or at the very least, parallel to the sweeping changes that would come later with vernacularization. It appears like no mere coincidence that *bhakti* trends, including the use of regional languages and the localization of universalized, pan-Indic Sanskrit religio-cultural formations, began in Tamil country and later moved northward at the exact time when Kannada and Telugu were blossoming as languages of literary and political expression.

In one particular sense *bhakti* is a mode of vernacularization wherein the universal is made regional. The crucial difference seems to be in the amount of overt politicization that underwrites each process. And as we have seen the forces of cosmopolitan vernacularization are most often inspired by and directed at the political, whereas the *bhakti* movement, especially among the Āḻvārs, was rooted in a more personal religious domain. This differentiation is certainly rooted in the rise and development of South Indian temple culture which became a

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[77] Dandin and other Sanskrit writers of renown were sponsored by the Pallavas who upheld Sanskrit as the language of highest prestige.

[78] Ramanujan 1993: 109. Hart adds "it was the Hindus, and especially the Śaivas, who built on the indigenous elements of the Tamils, making for their gods temples similar to the ones that already existed, identifying Murukaṉ with Skanda, replacing the *naṭukal* with the *liṅgam*, adopting the techniques of ecstatic worship through the examples of the Nāyaṉmārs and Āḻvārs, and in general making Śaivism and, to a lesser extent, Vaishnavism, natural developments of the original religion of the Tamils…." Hart 1975: 72.

[79] Hardy 1983: 44.

[80] In the Śrīvaiṣṇava context this lead to the notion of the 108 *divya-deśams*, literally holy lands that were (excepting two celestial additions: Vaikuṇṭham and the Milky Ocean) rooted in a sacred geography spread throughout the Tamil country.

locus of not only religious, but social and political life as well.[81] The essential point is that *bhakti* is tantamount in scope and influence to a vast geo-cultural process like vernacularization. If, however, the *bhakti* movement as Pollock argues was not a catalyst to cosmopolitan vernacularization[82] then it may very well have been an antithesis to the process. *Bhakti* poets stressed a return to oral modes of circulation that were decidedly non-courtly, forces diametrically opposed to two of the defining features of vernacularization, a process that seems more and more elitist, even as courtly vernacularizers were throwing off (and in a sense tightening) the chains of a Sanskritic cultural hegemony. The influence of *bhakti* does not fit Pollock's model of vernacularization because it is not cosmopolitan in nature, it eliminates not only the court-centered zone of literary production but an outward political agenda as well.

In another sense, *bhakti* becomes the experiential solution to the dialectic presented by vernacularization. This is to say that the *bhakti* poets were able to harmonize, and in a sense resolve, the tension created by the dyadic notions of local-translocal, cosmic-worldly and temporal-eternal.[83] Important here is "one of the basic properties of all *bhakti* hymnody: the synchronic projection of the diachronic event - of the story of god; in other words, the personal story of the god is telescoped into characteristic epithets."[84] The *bhakta* worships god as local, translocal, and fundamentally, the nexus of both. Two examples, one from Nammāḻvār and one from Kṛṣṇadevarāya will help to illustrate this simple yet profound concept.

My lord
    who's both dearth and plenty
    hell and heaven
    friendship
        enmity
    venom and sweet ambrosia

my ranging various lord:

I saw there
    in Viṇṇakar
        city named Sky
        city of rich houses[85]

[81] "Stylistically we have here the beginnings of a new *genre* of Tamil poetry: that of poems dedicated to *temples*. Most of the poems found in the *Prabandham* and in the *Tirumuṟai* will belong to the same genre. By implication we can say that here the poet's attention and source of *patronage* has shifted from kings and chieftans to a new cultural (and economic) focus: the temple." Hardy 1983: 207.
[82] Pollock 2006: 428-9.
[83] This dialectic is well represented by the Vaiṣṇava doctrine of *paratvam* (otherness) versus *saulabhyam* (ease of access) in which god is represented as essentially separate from the *bhakta* but intimately close as well.
[84] Zvelebil 1974: 90.
[85] Nammāḻvār TVM 6.3.1, see also TVM 6.3.5-6 in Ramanujan 1993: 14. The reference to Viṇṇakar again emphasizes the localizing quality of the *bhakti* mode. In regard to the dialectic of opposites, Hardy adds: "Never at rest in his emotions or thoughts, he constantly struggles with the mysterious, trying to grasp it in never-ending dialectics; he gropes for words and symbols to express his innermost and contradictory sentiments, and attempts to transcend the painful limitations of the natural order with reference to the transcendental Kṛṣṇa, by exposing himself completely to that very pain. The richness and variety of his language and symbolic repertoire is matched by the intensity with which he explores every corner of his emotions, and in the final analysis his greatness lies in his total surrender to the impossible: to reach out for the transcendental while fully immersed in the natural order, or in his own words 'to see Kṛṣṇa with his eyes'." Hardy 1983: 360-1.

Soul of the Universe and Lord of All Beings
You are Infinite, Indivisible and Invisible!
You are the foundation of the whole world
and yet You exist without support.
You are the composite universe of molecules
and yet You are subtle as an atom.[86]

The stylistic resolution of these oppositional pairs appears to be rooted in a very old Tamil belief that the cosmic forces of nature were not outside of ourselves and our community, but rather contained within specific people of society, and now more generally, the heart of any devout *bhakta*. Although similar notions of divinity appear in northern traditions, the sentiments seem amplified in Tamil even though the mythological concepts were of a foreign provenance. In so much as the mythology of the Sanskrit gods were being transformed, the old poetics of the Sangam time were evolving and developing to suit these new ideological formations.[87] *Bhakti* is therefore a modality of being that draws on both classicisms of South Asia, and yet transcends both to create a wholly new approach towards literature and religion; in fact, the ideology of Tamil *bhakti* is still the primary mode of modern religious practice throughout much of South Asia. As Zvelebil adds, "the *bhakti*-inspired, religious-philosophical hymns are consumed and appreciated as ideology, as living religion, as ritual texts and prayers for temple and home."[88] This 'living religion' is the mode by which the *bhakti* poets transformed the cerebral and philosophical into the immediate and devotional.

2.2 Modes of Worship

Bhakti transforms literature from "the heard" or "the remembered" to "the spoken" or the "the received," from *śruti* or *smṛti* in Sanskrit to *moḻi* and *vāymoḻi* in Tamil. The *bhakti* text is an outpouring more than a literary production, and the poet is no longer an unknown master but a real, living speaker. These developments evidence what we may call literary agency, individual authorship, religious subjectivity, or quite simply voice – aspects that were incipient in the Sangam phase, especially in the historically grounded *puṟam* poems. In the *bhakti* mode the speaker and poet are one. Whereas Kālidāsa tells the story of a *yakṣa*'s longing, Āṇṭāḷ speaks boldly for herself and her emotions, making the first person voice central to the *bhakti* style. As Ramanujan has noted, "the only true 'romanticism' in Indian civilization is to be found in *bhakti* arts and attitudes."[89] The notions of subjectivity and romanticism, dare we say modernity, would grow and spread over the following centuries, and by the time of Kṛṣṇadevarāya, the old subjectivity which was bound by a mythic landscape was now more fully grounded in a

[86] AM VI.100.

[87] The anthologies or *tokais* of Sangam literature were compiled in the eighth and ninth centuries, a time when Āḻvār literature was present. Their disinclusion in any of the Sangam collections evidences the newness and non-conformist nature of this new literary modality. See Hardy 1983: 241. The earliest *bhakti* poems, in fact, can be traced to the *Paripāṭal,* certainly a later anthology and yet very indicative of the transformations in Tamil literary theory underway due to the influence of the Sanskritic cultural infusion. As Zvelebil notes: "these hymns are very probably the first full-fledged *bhakti* or devotional poems in Tamil literature, and they are saturated with well-known Vaiṣṇavite legends; Tirumāl has a pronouncedly Kṛṣṇaite character..." Zvelebil 1974: 48.

[88] Zvelebil 1974: 89.

[89] Ramanujan 1993: 166.

historical reality. As we will see later in Chapter 3, the evolution of an Indic subjectivity, both religious and political, is well attested to in the writings of the famed poet-king.

In addition to a growing sense of subjectivity, the *bhakti* poems are strikingly different from anything that preceded them because they were specifically focused in and for the domain of religious life – a form of devotion that at that time in South India involved temples and congregational worship. Unlike the Sangam poems, the *bhakti* poems had a specific religious/practical goal, a fact intimated by the *phala-śruti* verses or meta-poems which were likely appended to the poems after their initial production. What these meta-poems do is contextualize and organize the *bhakti* poets' outpourings into functional modes of religious worship. The group of devotees at a temple could use these poems as a form of liturgy, as vehicles for congregational singing, and ultimately as a means for spiritual liberation. The *bhakti* poems define a religiosity that is spontaneous, musical and communal, and therefore quite unlike the highly aestheticized experience of *kāvya* or even Sangam poems which are more cerebral and less overtly emotive in nature.[90]

Kṛṣṇadevarāya, in his characteristically syncretic style, offers us a fascinatingly rich description of the Āḻvār Viṣṇucitta and his accompanying Vaiṣṇava devotees as they enter Śrīraṅgam. The scene is one of group pilgrimage and exhibits the humble devotion of pious worshippers, qualities which were worthy of praise and emulation. The poetic imagery beautifully harmonizes the modalities of *bhakti* and *kāvya* by simultaneously remaining both aesthetically elevated and immediately grounded in a devotional reality.

Viṣṇucitta completed the noon rites
and along with Goda,
who had bathed and decorated herself too,
proceeded on to Śrīraṅgam, surrounded
by a congregation of Vaiṣṇava worshippers.
Worried that the colorful beams of light from jewel-encrusted eaves
 might stain their pure white clothes,
 they quickly walked in search of alms.
When citizens gave them a handful of gems, or an ārati of rubies
 instead of the requested rice or grains,
 they left the gifts at the doorway.
When they heard the jingling anklets of women or elephants
 coming towards them in the street,
 they quietly moved out of the way.
When they smelled the aroma of food, or the fragrance of flowers-
 offerings prepared in every household,
 they tightly held their breath.
And when they heard both singing and dancing
 and the chatter of parrots and mynas,
 they half listened because the songs were in praise of Viṣṇu.
In this way, the group of devotees, like an island of white
 entered the temple of Śrīraṅgam.[91]

[90] As much as the *bhakti* poets, especially the early Āḻvārs, represent a growth of indivual poetic subjectivity, the later *bhakti* saints like Kulacekaraṉ developed the communal aspect of the *bhakti* ideal that eventually centered around the adoration, imitation and out right worship of great *bhaktas*.

[91] AM VI.93-4.

In essence, the *bhakti* modality was poetry for an expressly soteriological end. The poet, the singer and the audience of temple devotees were all involved in a shared experience of god. The word *bhakti* in fact means to share and as such religious devotion was now a group endeavor. Here is one further example from *Āmuktamālyada* which depicts Goda's ritual practice and singing as she is accompanied by her closest friends.

Everyday before dawn
the One with a Lotus Face awoke in silence.
She took a secret path to her father's garden pool
led by her friends, who sang the Southern Vedas
as they carried the things needed for her bath–
turmeric and gooseberries in golden bowls,
a thin petticoat to bathe in, and fresh clean clothes to dry her…

And so she prepared to perform the morning prayers,
all according to ancient tradition.

Goda and her friends walked outside
and circumambulated the inner sanctum
with lowered heads, consecrated
by holy water from the Lord's blessed sandals.

And as she continued like this, day after day, performing pūjas to Viṣṇu
the pains of her separation were eased, and she grew stronger.
She went on praising that Lord of the Yadus,
passing the Spring by singing songs in Tamil.[92]

2.3 Relationships with God

Within this collective group structure of worship, however, each *bhakta* would develop a personalized relationship with the god, an affinity that seems to have developed from the various kinds of kinship bonds which were so important to the early Tamils. Among the Āḻvār poets these relationships were primarily expressed through a myriad of connections to the central god Kṛṣṇa, who more than any other deity, could accommodate this variety of associations. There was a very personal identification with the mythic *gopis* and their struggle with physical, or rather spiritual union with the Lord. In terms of other familial ties, Kṛṣṇa's mythic past was equally resonant. The romantic love between man and woman was exemplified by the love for Kṛṣṇa by Rādha[93], the teacher-student dynamic as well as the bond between loyal friends by Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and finally the parental love between mother and child by the highly emotional love between Yaśodha and the boy Kṛṣṇa. In all these ways, the transcendent god Kṛṣṇa was more than localized, he was in a very real sense domesticated into Tamil social life.

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[92] AM V.89, 94-5. 'Southern Vedas' is *drāviḍa-āmnāya* and 'singing songs in Tamil' is *drāviḍa-bhāṣa pāḍucu*, both in reference to the *Divya Prabandham*.

[93] "from the very beginning, the Tamils applied their own poetic conventions to the gods and mythological figures from North India, and that from the first they emphasized the roles of the new gods in what was for them the central and most sacred act of life, love between man and woman." Hart 1975: 58.

These familial relationships between worshipper and worshipped were not only variable, they were each dualistic, invertible, and reversible, thereby making the poems capable of dialogic expression. This kind of intimacy led to the more familiar, spontaneous and outwardly expressive poetry that became so characteristic of the tradition. *Nindā-stuti* or praise/worship through censure was one particular poetic mode that was developed and heightened by this spiritual closeness. An extended usage of this technique is evidenced in Chapter V of *Āmuktamālyada* when Kṛṣṇadevarāya describes Goda's caustic yet definitively amorous feelings as a pinning lover in search of her beloved.[94] Later in Chapter VI Viṣṇucitta also exhibits this kind of retaliatory tone towards Lord Raṅganātha.[95] Viṣṇucitta is a perfect example of the mutability that is possible in these various relationships: he is father to the goddess, father-in-law and servant to the god, but in the end addresses him as father.[96] A few examples from *Āmuktamālyada* will illustrate the complexity of these relations:

> 'O Lord! I've never read a book or religious text.
> I'm totally blind to these things.
> I'm a mere temple servant who works in the flower garden.
> My hands are rough and callused from digging in the dirt,
> breaking clods of rock-hard clay with a pickaxe.
>
> His great lordship makes him the Ultimate Sovereign.
> That God Born in the Line of Śūra who has humble subjects at his feet
> will surely grant this simple favor for his future father-in-law.
> For it is he who creates the costumes that we wear,
> and though our roles may be great, his play is greater!'
>
> 'O, my father!' moaned Viṣṇucitta.
> 'What's done is done. I can't bear such misery.
> Speak from within and calm me with kindness.'[97]

The overriding tonality of these poems regardless of relational type is what may be deemed, for lack of a better term, emotionalism – a kind of passionate devotion based on *viraha* or longing. And although this kind of spiritual yearning is present in all the modalities mentioned above, it is most evident and most poignantly expressed in the paradigm of separated lovers. The varied emotional relationship between romantic lovers is the ultimate mode to express the deepest workings of *bhakti* paradigm. In many ways this may be an extension of Sangam literature's "evident preoccupation with themes of absence and separation."[98] Take just one example of a poem from the *akam* genre in the *neytal tiṇai*, the landscape of "anxious waiting and secret meetings":

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[94] See AM V.40 – V.54 for a series of brilliant verses in the *nindā-stuti* mode.
[95] AM VI.108 – 111.
[96] In Periyāḻvār's own "verses we have the roots of a tremendously prolific genre, the *piḷḷaitttamiḻ*" Zvelebil 1974: 102. His poetic love for the boy Kṛṣṇa was apparently transferred to his foster daughter. For further information see also Paula Richman's study of *piḷḷaittamiḻ* poetry in *Extraordinary Child*: Penguin 2008.
[97] AM II.90, VI.120 and VI.114.
[98] Shulman 2001: 15, and further supported by others in Hardy 1983 and Cutler 1988.

My body,
young mango leaf,
is now lovesick yellow

for that man
of the seashore

where the stork sleeps alone
in the flowering groves
of tigerclaw trees.[99]

The idea is of particular importance to the Āḻvārs in general and to Āṇṭāḷ in particular. Her femininity and adolescence make her poems all the more powerful, immediate and believable, for she is not only drawing on a particular mode, she is expressing her genuine feelings for god as both lord and lover.

This kind of impassioned expression often functions of three levels, i.e. the aesthetic, erotic and ecstatic. The latter in particular is characteristic of the 'newness' that defines the *bhakti* ideal. In regard to the Āḻvārs, Ramanujan has stated that their poems evoke

> "the primal, the essential experience of *bhakti*: not ecstasy, not enstasy, but an embodiment; neither a shamanic flight to the heavens or soul loss, nor a yogic autonomy, a withdrawal of the senses – but a partaking of the god. He may pass through enstasy (withdrawal) and ecstasy (out-of-body experiences) as stages. Like certain shamans, a bhakta seeks to be a place, a vessel, for his chosen spirit who has chosen him…A bhakta is not content to worship a god in word and ritual, nor is he content to grasp him in a theology; he needs to possess him and be possessed by him."[100]

One of the finest examples of this divine embodiment, and the contradictions inherent within it, can be seen in a long yet detailed *vacanam* from Chapter V of *Āmuktamālyada*. Here a distraught father Viṣṇucitta is hopelessly pleading with the lord about the state of his lovesick daughter. He vividly describes the inversion of ritual practice and iconoclastic nature of her actions, oppositional pairs that invoke the *bhakti* dialectic. In short, he describes the divinely 'possessed' quality of her uniquely confounding behavior.

> Day after day his daughter grew thin and he grew anxious. Viṣṇucitta became a very, very sad man. He couldn't understand why this was happening for he couldn't look past his own innocence, but he knew things were getting worse and worse. He would go to the temple, and at the end of the *pūja*, after the prostrations were done, he would hide behind the door and voice the hopelessness in his heart. After saluting the Lord again he said:
>
> "O God! I am your servant. For some mysterious reason my daughter is engaged in acts of devotion that weaken her body to the point of fainting. She doesn't listen to me. I was

[99] *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 144 in Ramanujan 1985: 40.
[100] Ramanujan 1993: 116.

once a childless man but this daughter that you gave me made me father! Oh, what can I do?! Moreover, her way of practicing *tapas* is not like our way of practicing *tapas*.[101]

We keep vigil on your special day of fasting and on your birthday but not for several nights at a stretch; we count rosary beads made of lotus seeds but not the fibers of lotus stalks; we use the flowers from your *pūja* to ornament our ears, but not to make a blanket for our bed.

We drink holy water from your sacred ewer, but she uses it to bathe her body. During the Moon Fasting Ritual, we eat a little more each day as the moon grows, but she eats a little less. When we engage in meditation we restrict our breathing, but she just lies still. When we make the Mind Mudra and place our hands above our hearts, she simply touches her cheek.

We wear bark garments but she wears clothes made of tender shoots. We sing songs of praise on the white fortnight of a new moon, but she throws tirades on the full moon night.

This is how she carries on. What kind of *tapas* is this? Has she gone crazy?

For people like me who are totally devoted to you, it is difficult to break free from our true nature. You are the Supreme Soul, present in all things, there is nothing you don't know. O please Lord, tell me about her ways."

Hearing this The Lord Who Held Mount Mandara took great pity on Viṣṇucitta, and gently laughed at his naiveté…[102]

As the prose-poem above describes, this kind of devotion borders on the torturous, a state of being that Hardy calls "painful ecstasy."[103] This pain is evident throughout Āṇṭāḷ's *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* as well as Chapter V of *Āmuktamālyada*. The modes exhibited there will be explored within a more detailed analysis of the Āḻvārs, with specific reference to Pĕriyāḻvar and Āṇṭāḷ. These two figures figure most prominently in *Āmuktamālyada* and both certainly played an inspirational role in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's heart and mind as he composed.

2.4 The Twelve Suns

To escape the intense heat of the twelve Āditya suns
Viṣṇu resides in the cool loving hearts of the twelve Āḻvār saints,
intoxicated by the sweet cascades of nectar that fill their lotus minds.
In my search for salvation I honor these luminous bodies,

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[101] See later sections for the importance and variable connotations of this term. See also 'Note on Tapas' in Heifetz 1985: 17.
[102] AM V.157, not included in the translations in Chapter V.
[103] Hardy elucidates four different modalities, all of which appear in the poems of Āṇṭāḷ and Kṛṣṇadevarāya. 1. mystical relish causing pain because it takes the *bhakta* out of an environment dear to him/her; 2. temporal fluctuations between union and separation; 3. disease and possession being closely connected in the Tamil awareness, and ecstasy being a kind of possession; and 4. spatial separation. Hardy 1983: 365.

twelve blessed souls of the earth.[104]

The twelve Āḻvār[105] saints who lived in the second half of the first millennium CE[106] exerted a tremendously influential position in the development of pan-Indic Vaiṣṇava religiosity. Characteristic *bhakti* "themes find some of their first and finest expressions in the poetry of the Āḻvārs – themes such as the Lord's creation as play (*līlā*), Viṣṇu's incarnations, Kṛṣṇa's childhood, Lord and devotee as lover and beloved, to name only a few."[107] In particular, their vast output of devotional literature served as the scriptural foundation for the widespread dissemination of the Śrīvaiṣṇava faith. The highly syncretic nature of their contributions is commented upon by Hardy:

> "Ignoring the social and chronological variations, we can postulate the following factors: ecstatic religion without reference to Kṛṣṇa, a literary norm which associates Kṛṣṇa with separation and a particular landscape, earthy folk literature which knows of Kṛṣṇa as the hero of specifically Southern myths, and the temple cult which worships him as the manifest transcendental god. It is the Āḻvārs who will bring these disconnected strands together."[108]

Kṛṣṇadevarāya was thoroughly steeped in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition and almost every poem in his great work exudes a sense of his personal devotion. The famous *avatārika padyam* or invocation verse to his *iṣṭa-devata* Lord Vĕṅkateśvara is also interpreted as a salutation to Kulaśekhara Āḻvār in his *aṁśa-avatāra* as the Kaustubha gem.[109] The invocatory decad that ends with an explicit poem about the saints (quoted above), is in fact a sustained evocation of their divine status, and their central importance in the poet's heart.

In so much as a vibrant mythology had developed around these figures, regarded as they were as 'blessed souls of the earth' (*dhanyātmulau ila divyulan*), the twelve Āḻvārs, unlike the sixty-three Nāyaṉārs who seem to include some legendary figures, are by all accounts historical personages. There are two important hagiographic sources that provide information about the Āḻvārs: Pinpaḻakiya Pĕrumāl Jīyar's fourteenth century *Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* or *Guru Parampara Prabhāvam* in *maṇi-pravāḷam* and Garuḍavāhana Paṇḍita's fifteenth century *Divya-sūri-caritram* in Sanskrit. As Ramanujan stresses, the "saints' lives, the first Hindu attempts at full life-stories, are legend-like and stylized, yet unmistakably about real men and women."[110] These biographical source materials were surely familiar to Kṛṣṇadevarāya who was well read in post-Āḻvār Śrīvaiṣṇava literature. His preference for Sanskrit is also clear as his account of Āṇṭāḷ seems to follow the version in the *Divya-sūri-caritram* which includes four chapters describing

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[104] AM I.10.
[105] Āḻvār same derivation as Āṇṭāḷ, *i.e.* to rule. See Hardy 1983: 250.
[106] Although it is difficult to date the Āḻvārs, most scholars believe that they lived from the seventh to tenth centuries CE (see table XIV Hardy 1983: 269, also Dehejia 1990: 2-3). First there were the so-called *mutal* or early Āḻvārs, Poykai, Pūtam and Pey, then Pĕriyāḻvār and Āṇṭāḷ, and lastly Nammāḻvār and Madhurakavi around 900 CE. From internal textual evidence and historiographic cross-referencing it is fairly well accepted that Viṣṇucitta and Goda lived in the latter half of the eighth and early half of the ninth centuries (Sistla 2010: 36, Hardy 1983: 268). For an alternate assessment of Pĕriyāḻvār's date see the Ko Neḍumāraṉ correspondence in Nandakumar 1989.
[107] Ramanujan 1993: xv.
[108] Hardy 1983: 128.
[109] For a further details for all twelve saints and their respective *āyudha* associations, see Note I.3. Also AM I.2 and Note I.2 on the philosopher Rāmānuja's divine association with the serpent Ādiśeṣa.
[110] Ramanujan 1993: 166.

Āṇṭāḷ's wedding to Lord Raṅganātha, an event beautifully described at the end of *Āmuktamālyada* but wholly absent from the earlier *maṇi-pravāḷam* account in the *Guru Parampara Prabhāvam*. Later in the fifteenth century, Ettūr Narasiṁhācārya's disciple Anantācārya wrote another Sanskrit hagiographic account entitled *Prapannāmṛta* including the lives of the Āḻvārs, as well as the later philosophers based around the growing tradition at Śrīraṅgam including Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika. This was also the first text to refer to Āṇṭāḷ as Āmuktamālyadā, claiming that she gained the moniker after giving Lord Viṣṇu a garland that she had worn and taken off. Again this was likely a text that Kṛṣṇadevarāya was familiar with. With this background it is possible to proceed to a more detailed analysis of the two Āḻvār saints who figure most prominently in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's epic: Pĕriyāḻvār and his foster daughter Āṇṭāḷ, or Viṣṇucitta and Goda as they are most commonly referred to in the text.[111]

Viṣṇucitta

The *bhakti* movement has always been intimately connected to an overt challenge of hierarchically established social structures and norms. This anti-conventionality is clearly seen in Āṇṭāḷ's case by the fact that she gives god a 'worn' garland, worn as in the garland was already put on, but also in the sense that it is now impure and unworthy as a sacred offering. The paradigm is of course inverted again as the god describes that these are the only garlands he desires. They are blessed and consecrated solely because they come from a beloved. In AM I.14 (quoted in full below) we find Āndhra Viṣṇu describing the "pleasure of receiving a gift from your beloved" (*priyā-paribhukta bhāk*). In a sense *bhakti*, true devotion, trumps ritualized notions of purity and offers a mode of worship that is individualized and unmediated by ritual norms. Even today, the first *pūja* performed at the Śrī Villiputtūr temple is the garlanding of the god with Āṇṭāḷ's discarded garland from the day before. Again this act is totally against all standard temple practice, but exemplifies the new *bhakti* modality wherein true love for god can purify, and in fact sanctify anything.

This anti-establishmentarian position has often, though not always, been reflected in an anti-brahmanical stance. Although most of the twelve Āḻvār saints were not brahmans[112], two ostensibly were, including Viṣṇucitta who was known as *nambi* in Tamil, as well as Bhaṭṭanātha in Sanskrit, clearly indicating his brahman status. From the source material it is clear that he was employed at the famous temple of Mannāru Svāmi in Śrī Villiputtūr. At times he is depicted as a lowly gardener or humble garland-maker, while in other instances he is described as a highly realized brahman who acts as head of the temple, or even chief of the town.[113] Here is one fascinating example from Viṣṇucitta's own poem which resonates with the inversion of themes like ritual purity, ideas that reach their fullest expression in the poems of Āṇṭāḷ.

[111] Āḻvārs had both Sanskrit and Tamil names, a reflection of linguistic preference between the two major subgroups within the Śrīvaiṣṇavas (Vaḍa=North [Sanskrit], Ten=South [Tamil]) but also a clear indication how the tradition was speaking to two different communities and attempting to bridge both. Kṛṣṇadevarāya uses the Sanskrit Viṣṇucitta and Goda, purportedly given a Sanskrit etymology as "Given by the Earth", although it is more likely a Sanskritization of the Tamil Kotai which is used throughout Āṇṭāḷ's poems.

[112] For further analysis of the Āḻvārs' caste affiliations see Hardy 1983: 255.

[113] Important in regard to the latter characterization are the *phala-śruti* verses appended to the *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* in which Pĕriyāḻvār's title of *nambi* is interprested as priest, chief or leader.

We are such servants: wearing the yellow garment which you have worn and then discarded, eating from your plate, and adorning ourselves with tulsī flowers…which you have worn and discarded.[114]

In *Āmuktamālyada* Kṛṣṇadevarāya beautifully synthesizes these two characteristics by describing Viṣṇucitta as a simple yet enlightened *bhakta*:

In that town lived a pious bhakta named Viṣṇucitta,
and true to his name, he always kept Viṣṇu in his thoughts,
like an elephant bound by the chains of yoga.
The sacred Viṣṇu mantra was always on his lotus lips
and though unread in the Vedas and Upaniṣads
he understood the great knowledge within
and went beyond all dualities to dwell
in single-minded devotion to his Lord.[115]

Viṣṇucitta still tended his flowerbeds, and devotedly served his lord.
He passed the time reading the Vedas and Vaiṣṇava *purāṇas*,
reciting them along with their commentaries
as he humbly prepared garlands of fragrant red lilies.[116]

Also the detailed *vacanam* I.78 in which Viṣṇucitta is thinking to himself seems to reflect the king's own disavowal of rigorous academic study sans the living practice of religious devotion.

Viṣṇucitta thought, 'If one has complete understanding and is absorbed in the ecstasy of the highest yoga, what is the point of arduous study riddled with difficulties? … If however, one does finish his studies and becomes a true scholar, the material world becomes meaningless and is relinquished, just as one who has grain rejects the husk, or one who has honey abandons the honeycomb. What's the use in reading through texts only to forget them in the end? What's the purpose of study for a recluse like me who's already completely at peace?...'

The poems of Viṣṇucitta's own *Pĕriya Tirumoḻi* are filled with folk themes and written in non-classical, song-like folk meters. He seems to be drawing not only on the older Sangam conventions but also the common lullabies and various song forms that people would sing to accompany chores, dances and games. As Hardy describes, it is in Viṣṇucitta's mythical poems, and in particular his mythical 'folk-songs,' that we find "the remarkable fact that the first *brahmin* Āḻvār is at the same time the one closest to folk art and sentiment."[117] The primary modality with which Viṣṇucitta expresses this earthiness is the evocation of the boy Kṛṣṇa. His poems are one of the first and most variegated expression of this aspect of Kṛṣṇa devotion, a fascination that likely grew out of his love for his daughter. In these poems he focuses on the mother's emotions, almost taking on the guise of Yaśodha, the beloved mother of the lord. Viṣṇucitta and

[114] PTM I.1.9 in Hardy 1983: 403.
[115] AM I.77. See also Note I.77.
[116] AM V.38.
[117] Hardy 1983: 402. Also: "In language and idiom, Pĕriyāḻvār comes closer to ordinary people than any other Āḻvār." Hardy 1983: 411-12, see also Zvelibil 1975.

Āṇṭāḷ both wrote almost exclusively about the god Kṛṣṇa, the former often about *bāla-kṛṣṇa* and the latter about *gopi-kṛṣṇa/viṣṇu*, forms that would suit each of them ideally as loving father and amorous adolescent respectively. In PTM III.8.4 for example, Viṣṇucitta's protective and fatherly emotions turn to his daughter and Kṛṣṇa (or Māl in this case) becomes the target of censure.

> I have but one daughter –
> the world hailed my great fortune.
> I raised her as if
> she were the goddess Śrī –
> lotus-eyed Māl took her away.[118]

In *Āmuktamālyada* we have a similar *nindā-stuti* of sorts (V.108-112) where Viṣṇucitta rashly cries out against the lord who has stolen his beloved daughter.

> 'Save me!' cried Viṣṇucitta.
> 'My daughter has been carried away
> by this Lord of Śrīraṅgam, a man of ultimate power,
> a man who can put Brahma and other gods in their place.
> Is it fair for him to rob an innocent brahman like me?'
>
> He threw up his hands in despair,
> his arms weak and withered like stalks of straw
> as he fell into an ocean of sorrow.
>
> 'Look sirs!' he said to the assembly of men
> as he choked up with tears–
>
> 'When he loves her so much,
> wouldn't I make arrangements for a proper wedding?
> Shall I give him my body, my life?
> Everything that I have– children, home, cattle, wealth and more,
> they're all for his devotees so they can perform pūjas.
>
> Oh, you all know this! Can't you understand?
> Take this little child from me and I'm nothing![119]

Viṣṇucitta's outburst is expressed in highly colloquialized Telugu diction and meter. This use of a 'low' register lends immediacy and emotionalism to a very natural scene – the pleadings of a father who has lost his young daughter to a powerful man. The scene serves to highlight Viṣṇucitta's humble character as well as his fervent love for his divine daughter.

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[118] Dehejia 1990: 10.
[119]AM VI.108-9.

2.5 Āṇṭāḷ - Mystic Poetess

Before exploring the poems of Āṇṭāḷ it will be important to contextualize them by understanding Āṇṭāḷ's position as the only female Āḻvār, and the only one who was an adolescent. Āṇṭāḷ's femininity is essential to her expression of spiritual love and resonates with the old Tamil conception of women as the locus of sacred power or *aṇaṅku*. This potent energy was also present in kings and certain low castes ritual specialists, but for a woman the sacred force was volatile and in need of control by something known as *kaṟpu* or chastity. The physical expression of this chastity was achieved through bodily mortification, penance and self-discipline. In Ak. 73 there is mention of *aṇaṅku uṟu kaṟpu*, or "chastity full of sacred power," a notion that finds resonance throughout the Sangam and post-Sangam age. *Kaṟpu* was in certain ways a "sort of asceticism, the restraining of all impulses that were in any way immodest," it was "conceived of as an almost tangible quality…producing domestic peace and light."[120]

This ascetic-like discipline is relatable to the North Indian concept of *tapas* or spiritual heat wherein ascetic energy is stored up within an individual as a mode of spiritual development. The accrued internal energy however, can also be released in the form of powerfully destructive forces. The northern tradition is filled with stories of sages who burn whole armies when disturbed during their peaceful mediations and a Tamil cognate to this fiery release of internal energy can be seen in the famous story of Kaṇṇaki in the *Cilappatikāram* where she scorches the whole city of Madurai with the power of her steadfast chastity.[121] The relationship between these two concepts created a link between the purity of a women's love and her spiritual development. The fiery power of *tapas* became a metaphor for the burning passion of separation, be it romantic or spiritual, and in the case of Āṇṭāḷ, loving god was transformed into a spiritual endeavor. As in the prose passage above, *tapas* is invoked as the heat of both religious discipline and erotic longing or *viraha.* In fact Kṛṣṇadevarāya repeatedly invokes this dual meaning as he describes Goda's burning love-sickness. Here is one poem when Goda's friends describe her strange behavior to each other:

> Then Marāḷi said, 'Listen to this Hariṇi!
> One day she asked me to put a bŏṭṭu on her,
> and because we're friends I did.
> But as I applied it, the musk started to sizzle
> making a sound like a slap on the face.
> Her heavy breathing totally dried out the bŏṭṭu
> and she picked at it with her nails and moped,
> picking up the countless flakes, over and over, and over again.'[122]

By all accounts Goda was, at the time of her apotheosis, a young girl developing into womanhood. In ancient Tamil society, pubescent girls, menstruous women and mothers after birthing were strongly tabooed, something that is still prevalent today in South India. This was because it was at these particular times that female *aṇaṅku* was particularly volatile.[123] An

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[120] Hart 1975: 96-97.
[121] See Hart 1975: 104 for further analysis.
[122] AM V.62.
[123] This seems to substantiate (to a certain extent) Hardy's correct but undeveloped claim that "Āṇṭāḷ's self-awareness is typically Southern." Hardy 1983: 427.

excellent example cited by Hart is Ak. 7 wherein a foster mother speaks to a girl who is coming of age:

> Your breasts are budding, your sharp teeth glisten
> your hair is coiled, and you wear a *taḻai*.
> Do not go anywhere with your friends who love to wander about.
> Our ancient town Mutupati has places where *aṇaṅku* assaults.
> You are under protection, and you should not go outside.
> You are no longer a little girl, wise, lovely child.[124]

A similar sentiment is achieved in a beautiful and complex *sīsa* verse from *Āmuktamālyada* that describes the drastic physical and psychological changes that are a natural part of puberty.

> As her beauty matured
> she watched the world with half-open eyes.
> She grew quiet, reserved, her eyebrows darkened
> and she frowned at playing with childish dolls.
>
> The palms of her hands and the soles of her feet
> turned beautifully pink, and her hair grew long and curly.
> Her waist became thin and her breasts grew full,
> pushing away her childhood.
>
> And though the others didn't notice these changes,
> she grew aware of her body.
> And in this way, day by day, her childhood slipped away.[125]

This transformative stage of maturation, marked by a new and heightened sense of sexuality, is also a time when *aṇaṅku* needs to be controlled and the young girl protected. In the case of Goda it seems that this budding pubescent sexual energy is transformed into a unique and fervent form of devotion to god. It is this conversion of volatile natural power (*aṇaṅku*) into devotional religious fervor (*bhakti*) that became the critical modality for *bhakti* poets in general and female saints like Āṇṭāḷ in particular. In this sense "her physical womanhood cannot be seen in isolation from her mysticism,"[126] and her bodily maturation becomes a vibrant metaphor for her blooming spiritual awakening. In this regard Āṇṭāḷ is surely unique among the Āḻvārs, and even among other female mystics of later times like Mīrā because of her tender age and unmarried status. Her poetry takes on a particularly charged sexual aura and her intense feelings of longing seem to be expressing the genuine love-sickness of a maturing girl. In some sense the erotic is no longer metaphoric, it is in fact literal. As Hardy adds: "by being a girl herself, Kotai can establish a direct analogy between the (mystic's) I, (the poetic) girl, (the mythical) *gopī*, and the actual speaker of a Kṛṣṇa folk song."[127]

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[124]Hart 1975: 93. See also Kuṟ. 337.
[125]AM V.7.
[126]Dehejia 1992: 33.
[127]Hardy 1983: 414. Also: "the emotional development of a girl from childhood to womanhood, and the various tensions that arise from becoming increasingly aware of one's natural environment, oneself, and society as three distinct factors, and of myth as something lying beyond all three." Hardy 1983: 426.

Commentators both old and new have often downplayed the overt sexual nature of Āṇṭāḷ's poetry but this cannot hide the fact that it is highly charged. Some of the most vivid poems can be seen in NC I.7, NC VIII.5, NC VIII.7, NC X.9 and many others where the theme of "entering" is explicit.

O cool clouds, place the plea of this servant
at the feet of the one with the beautiful lotus eyes
that one who churned the ocean filled with conch.
Beseech him to enter me for a single day
and wipe away the vermilion smeared upon my breasts.
Only then can I survive.[128]

Some scholars have even remarked that the innocent ritual bathing found in the *Tiruppāvai* is a euphemism for the sexual act. One topic that has been particular resonant not only in Āṇṭāḷ's poems but in all Indian poetry throughout the ages is the beauty and inherent sexuality of a woman's breasts. In ancient Tamil society particularly, breasts were considered the storehouse or dwelling place of sacred *aṇaṅku* power. Kaṇṇaki's burning of Madurai is accomplished by ripping off her breast and hurling it over the city walls. And in a famous verse from *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi*, Āṇṭāḷ seems to echo a very similar image and feeling of anger.

If I see the lord of Govardhana
that looting thief,
that plunderer,
I shall pluck
by their roots
these useless breasts,
I shall fling them
at his chest,
I shall cool
the raging fire
within me.[129]

Here is one last example from *Āmuktamālyada* that beautifully describes Goda's developing beauty as well as her innocent reaction to this exciting, and yet scary new stage of womanhood.

She matured slowly, and day by day, her breasts filled out.
Innocently she tried to hide them, pushing them down with her shawl
but her budding womanhood could not be stopped.
As she tried to flatten her chest, her breasts were pressed to her sides
but slowly they rose and grew in beauty,
pushing aside her fading youth.[130]

[128] NC VIII.7 in Venkatesan 2010: 169.
[129] NC XIII.8 Dehejia 1992: 156.
[130] AM V.21.

Nappinai – Lakṣmi – Bhūdevi

As much as Goda's emotional fragility and physical humanity are evident throughout these poems, there is also a very clear sense of her inherent divinity, not only in regard to her later apotheosis, but also in connection to her very origins. All the hagiographic accounts describe Viṣṇucitta's amazing discovery of a beautiful baby girl under a sacred tulasi plant. Kṛṣṇadevarāya is no different but he goes on to make explicit her god-like attributes from the very beginning.

> There, near a wide garden path
> beyond a clearing decorated with muggulu
> that sparkled like emeralds in the shade of green trees,
> next to a pond filled with white water lilies
> by the edge of a holy tulasi grove–
>   He saw a baby girl, the Auspicious One,
>   her little feet, and hands and lips, shining like tiny rubies.
>
> Astonished, he slowly approached the baby girl
> and examined her delicate body,
> glowing with every mark of beauty.
> And as he gazed for a while upon her divine radiance,
> he suddenly noticed that she never blinked!
>
> Viṣṇucitta rejoiced–
>   'O Mukunda!' he thought to himself,
>   'You yourself have blessed this childless man
>   with a beautiful baby daughter.'[131]

As mentioned earlier, each Āḻvār was considered an *aṁśa-avatāra* or earthly embodiment of one of Viṣṇu's companions or divine accoutrements. In the case of Goda she is associated with none other than the goddess Śrī.[132] The variety of forms in which this goddess is worshipped is manifold yet often interchangeable; she exists in various guises as a counterpart to Viṣṇu's many forms, but also in connection with a plethora of local folk goddesses. In orthodox Vaiṣṇava mythology Viṣṇu is depicted with not one, but two consorts[133], often construed as the celestial Lakṣmi and, as her name suggests, the earthly Bhūdevi.[134] This idea of two wives is also common to the Śaiva tradition[135] and can even be seen in the depiction of Kṛṣṇadevarāya with his official wife Tirumala Devi and his beloved second wife Chinna Devi. The more

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[131] AM V.4-5.

[132]Two other important women of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition are Kulaśekhara Āḻvār's daughter who was referred to as Nappinnai/Niḷādevi in his *Mukundamālā* and the semi-historical Padmini (Padmāvati) who was raised as a Coḻa princess and married to Raṅganātha (Lord Vĕṅkaṭeśvara in his earthly form as Śrīnivāsa), a possible conflation with the legend of Tirupati. Sistla 2010: 34.

[133] See AM VI.111when Viṣṇucitta proclaims: "You have Lakṣmi, Nīḷa, and Bhūdevi. What can I say when you set your mind on pure, innocent Goda."

[134] For a beautiful description of Goda as Bhūdevi, goddess of the earth, and the resultant reincarnation of the *nāga-kanyalu* (snake maidens) as her friends, see AM V.37 and Note V.37. Also see the invocatory verse AM I.2 which describes both Lakṣmi and Bhūdevi in a scene of divine jealousy.

[135] Murugan is often depicted flanked by his local Tamil consort Vaḷḷi and her higher-status counterpart Devayānī.

orthodox theologians make clear distinctions between these forms but it is clear that for many of the *bhakti* poets, including Kṛṣṇadevarāya, there was only one goddess with many forms, just as there was for Viṣṇu himself.

Throughout the text the poet speaks of Goda as Lakṣmi, Śrī, Bhūdevi and at one fascinating juncture, Satyabhāma.[136] He also uses Niḷādevi and Nappiṉṉai, appellations that are not common to the Sanskrit tradition. The Nappiṉṉai/Piṉṉai story is unique to the south, particularly the Tamil tradition, and most likely evidences the absorption of a local goddess and the re-identification of the same with the more pervasive mythological structures of the North. This Nappiṉṉai was likely transformed, given a new Sanskritized name as Nīḷādevī/Yeḷādevī, and later associated with Kṛṣṇa mythology.[137] In the *Tiruppāvai* and *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi*, there are several references to Nappiṉṉai in which she is commonly understood (not as Goda herself) but as Kṛṣṇa's cowherd wife.[138]

In *Āmuktamālyada* there is a fascinating verse from the dream sequence when Lord Āndhra Viṣṇu commands the king to write the great poem.

> 'If you ask, "Which of your forms shall I remember?"
> Listen, for I shall tell you.
> Recount the story of my wedding in Śrīraṅgam
> for I am a Telugu king and you are the King of Kannaḍa!
> Long ago I grudgingly accepted a garland offered by a man.
> Make up for this misdeed by describing
> the pleasure of receiving a gift from your beloved.
> Tell the story of my dear Āmuktamālyada, Giver of the Worn Garland.[139]

In this poem the phrase *appinnadi* in reference to Goda is actually *ā* + *pinnadi*, literally 'that little one' in Telugu. If taken with the preceding nasal, it becomes *nappinadi* as in the Tamil epithet Nappiṉṉai. "Interestingly enough, the Lord gives importance to the Tamil tradition; for, He hints at Nappinnai or Pinnai in the phrase."[140] The poet is speaking through the Lord, allowing him to voice his deeper emotions and subconscious will. Kṛṣṇadevarāya's subtle play on words is very deliberately placed in the mouth of god, but for most of the poem her refers to the goddess with Sanskrit terminology. He is thus, in the words of Sistla, "synchronizing both Tamil and Sanskrit traditions."[141] But even the title Āmuktamālyada is a Sanskritization of the Tamil appellation *cūṭi-kŏṭutta-nācciyār*[142], literally 'she who wore and then gave.' Moreover, Goda is a Telugu version (with a Sanskrit derivation of course[143]) of *kotai*, 'the one with fragrant curls,' a name that figures prominently in the *phala-śruti* verses appended to Āṇṭāḷ's poems.

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[136] See AM V.74.

[137]The Tamil myth of Nīlā is found in the southern recension of the *Harivaṁśa*, Hardy 1983: 77. For more information see Note 101 for references in the *Cilappatikāram*. See also Sistla 2010: 33.

[138] See TP 19 and 20. Also Venkatesan 2010: 118-20.

[139] AM I.14. See also Note I.14.

[140] Sistla 2010: 35.

[141] Sistla 2010: 35.

[142]*cūḍi-kuḍuta-nāñcāri* seems to appear first in Telugu literature with Tāḷḷapāka Annamācārya, an indication of the spread of the Āṇṭāḷ legend from South to North, and a specific nexus through which the Tamil tradition was melding and being absorbed with the Telugu as Annamaya was based at Tirupari, already a highly syncretic place of worship. See Annamaya's *vāḍĕ veṅkaṭeśuḍane vāḍe vīḍu* and *cūḍaramma satulāra*. Sistla 2010: 89-90.

[143] Goda is interpreted as *go* + *da* or 'given by the earth.'

Āṇṭāḷ's Writings

The two poetic works attributed to Āṇṭāḷ are *Tiruppāvai,* The Sacred Vow, and the *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi*, Her Sacred Words. The former is a collection of thirty verses that describe the ritualized actions of Āṇṭāḷ and her adolescent friends, while the latter, a collection of fourteen decads, is a more passionate expression of Āṇṭāḷ's love for god, a mode that has been described by many scholars as "bridal mysticism." The *pāvai* described in the *Tiruppāvai* is believed to have been an ancient Tamil ritual practiced by unmarried girls desirous of a good husband. The ritual was undertaken during the entire month of Mārkaḻi, a period that continues to hold great significance for Śrīvaiṣṇavas, particularly women. The girls are expected to rise at dawn, bathe in cold water, perform ritual observances, and pray for an auspicious future. An entire section of *Āmuktamālyada* (V.89-95) seems to be a depiction of this very ritual. Significant passages have been quoted earlier in relation to temple-centered devotion, but here is an additional verse that is particularly resonant with tone and sentiment found in the *Tiruppāvai*:

> She lit the tall lamp stands filled with brown cow ghee
> and made a heartfelt offering of sandalwood incense,
> clusters of bananas and sugar mixed with butter.
> And as she recited the sacred Viṣṇu mantra,
> she laid her lily garland across his chest.[144]

Essentially, this ancient and once common Tamil observance was refashioned and overlaid with Kṛṣṇa mythology. A similar transformation of the *pāvai* rite appears in a Śaiva context in Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvempāvai*.[145] Part of fulfilling the *pāvai* rite was the attainment of the *paṟai*, literally a drum which was most likely used for ritual purposes, an element of Tamil socio-cultural traditions that stretches back to the earliest recorded times. The drum is in fact a metaphor and Āṇṭāḷ herself proclaims that the desired goal of her devotion is not the *paṟai* but simply closeness with the Lord.

> We came at the break of dawn
> to worship you
> to praise your lotus feet
> bright as gold
> Listen to the reason for our prayers:
> You were born among simple folk
> whose livelihood was tending cows
> So you cannot refuse our small services.
>
> Know this Govinda
> We have not come here
> for the *paṟai*-drum
> For all time:
> for this birth and every birth that follows

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[144] AM V.92.

[145] There even seems to be early Jain verse from the eighth century that appropriates the *pāvāi* theme. See Dehejia 1990: 17, 38.

We are only yours.
We serve only you.
Direct our every other desire toward you.[146]

It is not surprising that the only Sanskrit work to mention this rite is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where reference is made during the worship of the goddess Kātyāyani.[147] This point will be explored later but it is clear that Āṇṭāḷ's poetic inspiration, though directed at the northern god Kṛṣṇa, was wholly rooted in a deeply Tamil sensibility. In poetic terms, her use of old Sangam tropes is without question, and the acute awareness of nature and its relation to humanity is evident in every poem. Take for example a comparison of Puṟ. 52 and TP 23 where the powerful imagery is almost identical:

A male tiger, in his cave on a high peak where evil spirits roam,
stretches and rises, full of his strength, and with his heart moved
by a hunger for meat, taking whatever direction he may wish,
sets out ravenously in search of his prey…[148]

A fierce lion asleep
in a mountain cave
for the season of the rains
comes awake:

He opens his fiery eyes
shakes himself
and his fragrant mane flies in all directions.

He stretches slowly
roars
and sets out.[149]

In terms of diction Āṇṭāḷ is again coming from a wholly Tamil background. She describes her own Tamil as pure, as *tūya* (NT VI.11) or *ceṉ* (NT IX.10) Tamil. Of course these references are found in the meta-poems that end each decad of the *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* and can be seen as evidence that even the later Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition which was heavily Sanskritized could still recognize the deeply southern nature of Āṇṭāḷ's poetry. In fact less than ten percent of her vocabulary is borrowed from Sanskrit, and so again we see that although the mythological themes were borrowed, the diction, and in due measure the emotive feeling of the poems, remain wholly Tamil. She even uses common, almost humorous colloquial phrases like "your talk is like the deaf speaking to the dumb," or "your words sting like sour juice on an open wound."[150]

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[146] TP 29 in Venkaresan 2010: 79.
[147] "An ancient fertility rite is given a Kṛṣṇaite song. Thus the 'we' of the girl includes Āṇṭāḷ herself, who may well have participated in such an observance as a young girl. In its oldest layers, the ritual presumably centered on the *pāvai*, the sand-figure of a 'lady' or 'mother goddess,' which the BhP interpreted as Kātyāyanī." Hardy 1983: 416.
[148] Puṛ. 52 in Hart and Heifetz 1999: 39.
[149] TP 23 in Venkatesan 2010: 73.
[150] See NT 12.1, 13.1 and others in Dehejia 1990: 31-2.

2.6 Advent of Śrīvaiṣṇavism

In the centuries that followed, the deeply Tamil ethos of the Āḻvārs was powerfully infused with Vedantic philosophical concepts and supported with a detailed exegetical analysis of the *Divya Prabandham*. The great eleventh century theologian Rāmānuja, brilliantly trained in the Sanskrit *sūtras* and possessing a keen analytical intellect, would overlay the Tamil poems with a highly complex Sanskrit-based theology that would come to be known as Viśiṣṭa Advaita.[151] It is noteworthy that this integrative endeavor of both religious as well as linguistic forms was happening at the same time that newly literarized languages like Kannada and Telugu were coming into existence. The fascinating process of religio-philosophical fusion underway in the deep South is well described in John Carman and Vasudha Narayanan's *The Tamil Veda*, an exploration of the commentarial literature on Nammāḻvār, the latest and arguably greatest of the Vaiṣṇava saints.[152] And although a deeper exploration of this evolution and the concomitant development of what is now commonly referred to as Śrīvaiṣṇavism is not possible here, it is critically important to stress that these transformations resonate with the general theme of north-south syncretism regarding South Asian language, literature and culture.

Kṛṣṇadevarāya himself, as well his great work *Āmuktamālyada,* are without question proponents of the Śrīvaiṣṇava faith. The overall thematic tone of the epic, as well as long sustained passages, are fully imbued with a Śrīvaiṣṇava theology and aesthetic. Early on in Chapter III, Viṣṇucitta gains victory at the Pāṇḍya court by quoting from the *Brahma Sūtras* and the *Upaniṣads* to establish the supremacy of Viṣṇu devotion.[153] Here is one verse where the Viśiṣṭa Advaita philosophy related to Vaiṣṇava devotion is made explicit:

> In this way, Viṣṇucitta used Dvaipāyana's *Brahma Sūtras*
> and the authoritative Vedas to prove beyond any doubt
> that God is the everlasting bliss of consciousness.
> He was praised by all the scholars and went on to teach
> that the God Viṣṇu was different from all other gods,
> clearly establishing with irrefutable proofs
> the absolute preeminence of Viśiṣṭa Advaita.[154]

This type of philosophical debate is mirrored again in Chapter IV when Yāmunācārya convincingly converts another Pāṇḍya sovereign in an explicit victory of Śrīvaiṣṇavism over Vīraśaivism.[155] Even the Khāṇḍikya-Keśidvaja interlude in Chapter III which is drawn heavily from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, involves a passionate display of philosophical acumen and Vaiṣṇava superiority.

In regard to the syncretism of Tamil *bhakti* and Sanskrit Vedānta there are two texts that are of particular importance: the Tamil *Divya Prabandham* and the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

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[151] "the commentaries are written on the doctrinal premises of Viśiṣṭa Advaita, which makes them impose on the poems conceptual categories alien to their original spirit." Hardy 1983: 245.

[152] See also Hardy 1983, and in particular regard to the connection between the Āḻvārs and Śrīvaiṣṇavism, see Hardy 1983: 243.

[153] For a particularly interesting verse, see AM III.8 which includes several quotations from the *Brahma Sūtras,* clearly a chance for the poet to show off his familiarity with these Vedāntic scriptures.

[154] AM III.9.

[155] Although Vīraśaivism was not present in Tamil country, Kṛṣṇadevarāya explicitly refers to the Vīraśaiva *jaṅgamas* that he was familiar with in the Kannada land and exposes the anachronisms of his narrative. For a translation of the relevant verses, AM IV.39-75, see Sistla 2010: 265-75.

The former, also known as the *Nālāyiram* or Four Thousand, is the collected hymns of all twelve Āḻvār saints. It is believed to have been compiled by the sage Nāthamuni sometime in the tenth century CE.[156] He was supposed to have set the beloved poems to music, and introduced their recitation into the daily rituals of temple worship. Very early on, Nammāḻvār's *Tiruvāymoḻi* was hailed as 'the ocean of Tamil Veda in which the Upaniṣads of the thousand branches flow together,' and the *Nālāyiram* as a whole was equated with the four Vedas, with each thousand representing a separate book.[157] This kind of equation raised the status of Tamil beyond the prestige of literary Sanskrit, and placed it on par with the holy Vedas which were revealed texts beyond the ken of human creation. In a sense this was more than simple vernacularization with a political agenda, it was language that spoke the word of god. As Hardy puts it, "Kṛṣṇa uses the poet as an instrument to speak about himself, which means that the Āḻvār's poetry is 'inspired' and contains Kṛṣṇa's 'revelation' about himself."[158] In an analogous example of religious, non-courtly vernacularization from the Śaiva context, here is Somanātha's declaration from the beginning of his *Basava Purāṇa*: "Let it not be said that these words are nothing but Telugu. Rather, look at them as equal to the Vedas"[159]

2.7 Ubhaya Vedānta and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa

Although Rāmānuja himself "never wrote a word of Tamil or cited a Tamil text" he most likely spoke Tamil as the language of daily communication. Though steeped in the Sanskrit tradition, his later disciples were deeply entrenched in Tamil culture and would slowly harmonize the two traditions, giving rise to the boldly syncretic and highly popular brand of Viṣṇu devotion known as Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The philosophy behind the religion came to be known as *ubhaya-vedānta* 'dual/both *vedānta*', thereby reconciling both the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions. The later commentators were therefore clearly aware of the synthetic nature of the system they were creating. Furthermore, the commentarial literature on these Tamil Vedas or Drāviḍa Upaniṣads tangibly reflect this fusion in terms of linguistics – the language itself morphed into a hybrid blend of Sanskrit and Tamil, poetically described as *maṇi-pravāḷam* or "the gem in coral."

Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *Āmuktamālyada* represents a further extension of this integrative endeavor. He was surely familiar with, and heavily influenced by, the Tamil *Divya Prabandham* as well as several Sanskrit works including a variety Upaniṣads and Purāṇas, and root philosophical texts like the *Brahma Sūtras*. Use of the more analytical Sanskrit works are generally (though not exclusively) confined to the philosophical debates in Chapter III and IV. Here is one fine example which references the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and poetically resonates with much older Vedic sentiments as well:

> In the beginning there was only One–
> the all-pervading Nārāyaṇa.
> There was no Brahma, there was no Śiva.
> No heaven, nor earth, nor Sun, nor Moon.
> No fire, no stars, no water below.

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[156] Hardy 1983: 247.
[157] Ramanujan 1993: xi. See also the the dialectic posed in TVM XI.6 = "He is the meaning of the four Vedas, yet he took all meaning from my body."
[158] Hardy 1983: 326.
[159] Narayan Rao 1990: 5-6.

There was nothing at all but Oneness.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* it is told–
'The One thought "It is not right to be one. I will become many."'
So when one became many,
both sentient and non-sentient beings were created.
Nārāyaṇa became the sun within the sun,
and his two lotus eyes become the three, the eight,
the thousand eyes of Śiva, Brahma, Indra, and all the rest.[160]

In reference to Kṛṣṇadevarāya's use of the *Divya Prabandham,* the influences ars much more integrated and ubiquitous. The poet-king is drenched in Śrīvaiṣṇava devotion and this comes through not only in his overall tone, but in his direct poetic references to the text itself. In verse V.89 quoted above he literally seems to translating the idea of a Tamil Veda when he uses the compound *drāviḍa-āmnāya* or 'Southern Vedas.' Later in V.95 'praising that Lord of the Yadus…singing songs in Tamil' appears to refer not only to the Divya Prabandham but Goda's own song-poems the *Tiruppāvai* and *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi*. Here now are two more verses that include explicit mentions of the *Divya Prabandham.* See also how the poet can transform a simple country scene in verse I.56 to a playful evocation of devotion, and a serious verse of religiosity into a humorous and light-hearted plea.

In the gardens of Śrī Villiputtūr
Drāviḍa women bathe in oval ponds filled with red water lilies,
and after smearing themselves with holy turmeric
they tenderly collect lotuses for their morning pūja.

Walking along garden paths with flowers in their hands
and water jugs swaying at their hips, their silver anklets glitter and jingle
as they happily return home singing songs from the *Divya Prabandham*.[161]

At midnight, just outside that great bhakta's home
one can hear the sounds of the *Divya Prabandham* being recited,
the sacred stories of Viṣṇu being told, and Viṣṇucitta's own voice saying–
'Forgive me, there are not many curries, nor are they very hot.
We have no cake and the meal is not that great, but please,
please come and eat.'[162]

The Bhāgavatam

To further the point that there was a bidirectional process of culture interaction between North and South, we may briefly consider the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, a textual conduit that carried the new emotional modes of *bhakti* literature and practice from the Tamil country northward. As Hardy rightly claims: "this text was particularly important, because it made the regional religion

[160] AM III.10.
[161] AM I.56.
[162] AM I.84. See also Note I.84.

of the Āḻvārs available for the rest of India and in fact became the basis of almost all further development of emotionalism in India."[163] In fact the northerly spread of *bhakti* in the second millennium CE, an expansion that became so deep-rooted and omnipresent, can in many ways be seen as a strikingly counter-analogous process to the earlier influence of the Sanskrit cosmopolis. It seems that under the influence of *bhakti*, the process of vernacularization "kills" Sanskrit expressivity and relegates it back to a sterile language strictly employed for scientific and documentary ends.[164] In broad terms, the diffusion of Sanskritic culture to the south in the first millennium CE is countered by a reverse proliferation of *bhakti* modes that originated in the Tamil country. Therefore, if the *Divya Prabandham* was deemed the Tamil Veda, then the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* appears to be nothing short of the Sanskrit *Divya Prabandham*!

Based on the extensive research of Wilhelm Hardy in his 1983 "*Viraha Bhakti*: *The early history of Krsna devotion in South India"*, it is clear that the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was a literary production of the South evidencing a transparent absorption of Tamil-specific cultural elements. First he tracks how the great dark lord Māyon or Māl of Tamil lore becomes "the focal centre around which the whole complex of Northern Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa material is gathered."[165] He also analyzes specific Tamil games and rituals that appear in the work but not in any other literary works relating to Kṛṣṇa. The *kūtal* circle game, *pāvai* ritual and *ciṟṟil*[166] sandcastle songs, all of which are evident in Āṇṭāḷ's poetry, are absent from northern sources like the *Harivaṁśa*, Bhāsa's *Bālacarita,* the *Brahma Purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. These earlier Sanskrit texts however could have been known to some of the Āḻvārs as in the fascinating correspondence discovered by Hardy.[167] What is clear in this complex map of intertextuality is that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was a unique text because it incorporated distinctly Tamil elements into the Sanskrit fold, and subsequently carried them to all corners of the subcontinent to become the single most important Sanskrit text on Kṛṣṇa devotion.

During this transmission, the text was also refashioned in a variety of ways to suit local idioms, both cultural and linguistic. In the Telugu context, the *Bhāgavatam* as it is known was recreated by the famous poet Potana in a fifteenth century recension that is still popular with Telugus to this day. Kṛṣṇadevarāya's familiarity with this version as well as its Sanskrit predecessor seems likely. According to Vavilla, the poet was quite familiar with the text, especially the famous Rescue of the Elephant King passage. He gives specific citation that AM VI.43 "is very similar, in terms of words, rhythm and overall composition, to that of a verse in legend of *Gajendra-mokṣamu*…"[168] The fact that the Āḻvār poems were incorporated into a tenth century courtly Sanskrit composition, reworked into Telugu by a non-courtly poet and then utilized in the sixteenth century by a powerful king is a clear example of South Asian intertextuality and the ongoing dialogue between cosmopolitan and vernacular, court and temple, complexity and simplicity, erudition and felicity – binaries that have been, and always will be, in constant negotiation with each other.

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[163] Hardy 1983: 11.

[164] The critical influence of *bhakti*, specifically from South India, needs to be further explored in relation to Pollock's so-called 'death of Sanskrit.' See Pollock's "The Death of Sanskrit," Comparative Studies in Society and History 43 (2001): 392- 426.

[165] Hardy 1983: 218-20.

[166] cf. *Kalittokai* 51 for a Sangam reference to this rather ancient Tamil tradition. See also *Akanāṉūṟu* 110 in Zvelebil 1974: 15.

[167] Hardy 1983: 407 gives evidence that Pĕriyāḻvār knew of the *Harivaṁśa* (cf. HV 60.15b and PTM III.5.1).

[168] Sistla 2010: 76.

CHAPTER 3
The Poet-King

3.1 Milieu of a Deccan King

The deep extent to which Kṛṣṇadevarāya was personally involved with the Śrīvaiṣṇava faith is evident upon reading his literary masterpiece and understanding his poetic inspirations. History also tells of his seven famous (and certainly arduous in those days) pilgrimages to Tirupati to pay homage to his tutelary deity Lord Vĕṅkateśvara, his generous donations to temples across South India, and his robust incorporation of religious ritual into courtly life at his capital Vijayanagara. These facts frame the larger question as to whether mass religion, localized sects, or even the spatially and temporally discursive *bhakti* movement played a part in energizing (or even initiating) the vernacular revolution. At the same time an analogous debate weighs the importance of these religious forces in the shaping and/or making of polities and their political agendas. What seems to be the case, as it is so often when discussing such complex modalities of historic transformation, is that religion played less of a role in politics than was previously believed. The fact that these three streams, namely the religious, the political, and the literary are so deeply enmeshed within themselves, makes it all the more difficult to discern causal factors or dominant functionalities. In the case of premodern South Asia, the picture becomes even more complex as we must embrace an extremely diverse set of cultural practices. What seems most beneficial to scholarly inquiry is to approach historical and cultural developments with an integrative approach that strives to address several thematic issues in tandem rather than in isolation. This allows for a more comprehensive treatment and examination of a text, a historical figure, or a religious group.

A specific example of this cultural diversity is evident in a rich excerpt from a Portuguese chronicle written by Domingo Paes who visited the imperial capital in the autumn of 1520. His description of the nine-day Mahā Navami Festival allows us to conjure up an extremely vivid image of the city and its splendors – wonders so dazzling that Paes almost "fell over backwards with his senses lost"[169]:

> You must know that when it is morning the king betakes himself to that room where the idol is with its Brahmans, and he performs his prayers and ceremonies. Outside the house are some of his favourites, and on the square are many dancing-girls dancing. In their verandahs round the square are many captains and chief people who come there in order to see; and on the ground, near the platform of the house, are eleven horses with handsome and well-arranged trappings, and behind them are four beautiful elephants with many adornments. After the king has entered inside he comes out, and with him a Brahman who takes in his hand a basket full of white roses and approaches the king on the platform, and the king, taking three handfuls of these roses, throws them to the horses, and after...this he reaches towards the elephants and does the same to them. And when the king has finished this, the Brahman takes the basket and descends to the platform, and from thence puts those roses and other flowers on the heads of all the horses, and this done, returns to the king. Then the king goes again to where the idol is, and as soon as he is inside they lift the curtains of the room, which are made like the purdahs of a tent, and the king seats himself there where these are, and they lift them all.

[169] Sewell: 1972: 278, rephrased.

> Thence he witnesses the slaughter of twenty-four buffaloes and a hundred and fifty sheep, with which a sacrifice is made to that idol. These feasts begin in the 12th of September, and they last nine days, and take place at the king's palace.[170]

To paraphrase: after the morning *pūja* the king summons his captains and lords with all their retinues, as well as all the dancing-women, wrestlers, magicians and entertainers of his kingdom. All the attendees are then treated to an ostentatious parade of chariots, infantry, dancers and most importantly, the richly decorated state cavalry and elephantry. As darkness falls the people are entertained with fireworks, and after the evening *pūja*, the scrumptious feasting commences at midnight. This picture highlights what is in essence a snapshot of the Vijayanagara theater state[171]– a public court spectacle that incorporated Brahmanic ritual, military parades, state regalia, dancing, eating and merriment. Although this was a Hindu religious celebration, it also marked the annual assessment of the state military, accounting of vassal tributes and payments of per annum salaries. The yearly event thus brought together all the diverse subjects of the court, from ritual specialists to dancing girls, Hindu chiefs to Turkish mercenaries, and Portuguese merchants to poet-kings.[172]

Scholarly Approaches

The scene described by Paes is dynamic, integrated and culturally diverse, but a brief look at Vijayanagara historiography reveals a much more polarized assessment. An excerpt from a 1978 Amara Chitra Katha comic book[173] entitled "*Krishnadeva Raya the greatest emperor of Vijayanagara*," will serve to highlight several historiographic tropes including colonial Orientalism, nationalist historicism, and post-Independence communalism:

> The kingdom of Vijayanagara (founded in 1336 A.D.) was a stronghold of Hinduism at a time when India was politically dominated by Muslim rulers. The glory of Vijayanagara reached its zenith during the reign of the great Krishnadeva Raya (A.D. 1509-1529). Domingo Paes, the Portuguese traveller, described the capital city as "the best provided city in the world" and found it "as large as Rome and very beautiful to look at." Of Krishnadeva Ray, he wrote: "He is the most perfect king that could be, cheerful of disposition and very merry. He is a great ruler and a man of much justice.[174]

[170] Sewell 1972: 265-6.
[171]As Eaton explains, Vijayanagara functions at many levels: "Asiatic state," "feudal state," "theater state," "war state," and "segmentary state" Eaton 2005: 80. From this perspective all of these models provide valid descriptions of certain aspects of the empire, but any strictly categorical generalized formulation seems futile, unless it is viewed as dynamic, volatile, contradictory, variable, discursive, etc. See also Geertz, Clifford. *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (1980).
[172] Listen to the way Paes makes mention of the Turkish mercenaries: "Then the Moors – one must not forget them – for they were there also in the review with their shields, javelins, and Turkish bows, with many bombs and spears and fire-missiles;" Sewell 1972: 277-8, cf. Lopes 112.
[173] Ramya Sreenivasan use an analogous source in her study of the Padmini/*Padmavat* tradition. In that citation, Padmini is Indian and Aluddin Khilji is Afghan, there is no explicit mention of Hindu or Muslim but Ramya sees such assertions as articulating "the widespread assumption that conflict between religious communities in India was pervasive over the last millennium." Sreenivasan 2007 1-2. I believe this may be a case of reading too much into sources. The introduction to the Kṛṣṇadevarāya comic is bold and unambiguous.
[174]Amar Chitra Katha: *Krishnadeva Raya – The greatest Emperor of Vijayanagara*. Mumbai: India Book House Pvt. Ltd., 1978. Reprinted June, 2001.

The image of Vijayanagara as a "stronghold of Hinduism" is taken straight from the pages of Robert Sewell's 1900 publication of *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagara) – a contribution to the history of India* in which he describes the Deccani empire as "a Hindu bulwark against Mohammedan conquest."[175] Although this is a brilliant piece of positivist scholarship, it is wrought with a pervasive Orientalist ideology. First Sewell completely disregards all Indic source materials, giving recourse to the well-established notion that Indians did not write history. Second he weaves dense religious overtones into his cultural and political analysis of Deccani history.[176] The former critique was remedied by two significant publications by three pre-Independence-era Indian scholars: Krishnaswami Ayyangar's *Sources of Vijayangar History*, and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and N. Venkataramanayya's three volume *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History* published by the University of Madras in 1919 and 1946 respectively. By and large these sourcebooks were meticulously compiled inventories and half-translations of (primarily) Telugu texts culled from the rotting Madras state archives. Ayyangar and his successors however represent the fully British-educated scholar, indoctrinated with colonialist ideas about history and highly subject to the 'amnesia' of Vijayanagara. Ayyangar opens his work with: "The history of the empire of Vijayanagar, which till recently was as good as lost to us, was recovered through the efforts of Mr. R. Sewell." He praises him at length but regrets that the colonialist scholar "suffered from the neglect of the evidence available in various forms of literature." He reassures us that these "untapped sources" have now been organized so as to "speak for themselves."[177] The present examination endeavors to go further by integrating these textual sources into an analysis of historic trends and transformations.

Recent Contributions

As of late the highly polarized representation of Vijayanagara court life has come under strong criticism from a number of historians of premodern South Asia, especially those focused on Deccan studies, an area that has, and very much was at the time of Kṛṣṇadevarāya, a geo-cultural melting pot. Phillip Wagoner's important 1996 paper entitled "*Sultan Among Hindu Kings – Dress, Title and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara*" examined "the secular culture of Vijayanagara's ruling elite" in order to "recognize the extent to which Islamic-inspired forms and practices altered Indic courtly life in the Vijayanagara period."[178] Although it is very true that the process known as Islamicization was well underway in the southern Deccan, the passage from Paes forces us to nuance these ideas and understand that the culture of court was polyvalent, often contradictory, and capable of moving in two or more seemingly opposite directions at once. By this I mean that Islamicization can occur synchronically or diachronically, and in opposition or in tandem, with a process like Sanskritization, or even cosmopolitan

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[175] Sewell 1972: 1, cf. Thapar 1976: 324.

[176] To this discussion Wagoner adds: "despite the increasing tendency to recognize the determining role of *realpolitik* in the formulation of Vijayanagara's diplomatic and military policy, it remains a deeply entrenched notion that in the realm of cultural policy, Vijayanagara's purpose was to contain the spread of Islam and preserve Hindu institutions in the southern peninsula. Moreover, it is generally assumed that Vijayanagara was largely successful in implementing this cultural policy." Wagoner 1996: 852. He goes on to suggest two resultant stereotypes: a cultural conservatism to preserve classical forms and an entrenched notion that South India was more authentic and purely Hindu.

[177] Ayyangar 1986: 1.

[178] Wagoner 1996: 852.

vernacularization.[179] Wagoner explains Islamicization as a process of cultural change[180] – a political strategy through which elites could enter into a discourse with the more "universal" culture or language of political Islam. He demonstrates how this participation was effected though an adoption of cultural forms and practices that were secular rather than religious in nature,[181] adding that this influence did not take place "at the expense of" indigenous cultural traditions. In this particular sense, and in regard to the premodern Deccan specifically, Islamicization seems to be a political counterpart to the literary model of vernacularization. Unfortunately however, like Pollock, Wagoner neglects the 'Indicizing' aspects of these dialogic processes.

It is clear that Vijayanagara (as both state and a representation of its sovereign) was engaged in an evolving (South) Indicization of court practices, something we might call for lack of a better term – Tamilization. I believe Wagoner's characterization of Vijayanagara could be balanced with an analysis of Vijayanagara's increasing identification with the Tamil south, a process that is well evidenced for example, in the city's sacred architecture.[182] A less tangible marker is of course the spread of *bhakti* and new religious forms that were imprinted with a Tamil sensibility. One important issue to keep in mind is that these -Izations should not be taken as strictly linear, non-intersecting projections. In addition, processes like Islamicization and Indicization should not be seen as polar or antithetical trajectories. In other words, Kṛṣṇadevarāya was naturally creating and participating in a culture of court infused with several diverse and non-mutually exclusive modalities of governance. Deploying this multiplex of -Izations[183] in historical analysis urges the framing of larger questions: Can political cultures be totally secular? What are the political implications of a religious ruler? Is it possible to make distinctions like religious/secular or public/private or Hindu/Muslim? And if so, how are these formulations productive in constructions of the past?

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[179] One major difference seems to be that Sanskritization is effected primarily through religious practices whereas Islamicization operates largely in the confines of a secularized political culture. Wagoner adds: "Both situations involve processes of universilization, in which certain "local" cultural forms are replaced by functional analogues for a second, intrusive culture of broader geographic extent. Moreover, in both cases new forms are adopted as a means of advancing the collective self-interest of particular social groups, and in both cases an eventual concomitant of the process in the increasing participation of the members of these local groups within the varied social arenas of the universal culture. And, finally, the adoption of imported cultural forms and practices results, in both cases, in a more complex ordering of tradition within the "universalized" culture." Wagoner 1996: 872.

[180] Wagoner 1996: 854, and Note 1.

[181] In evoking the trope of "cultural adaptation" I am drawing on the ideas presented by Richard Eaton about "conversion" in his 1993 study *The Rise of Islam an the Bengal Frontier 1204-1760*. He explains that processes like conversion are "so gradual as to be nearly imperceptible." Eaton 1993: 269. He further posits a tripartite formulation of Inclusion, Identification and Displacement – modalities that are easily applied to the -Izations as a whole. Eaton argues that this was part of the *zeitgeist* "spirit of pragmatism" that inspired new modes of dealing with life's everyday problems.

[182] "by the early fifteenth century had begun to incorporate southern elements such as entrance towers with barrel-vaulted roofs"...."progressively greater Tamil influence...imperial city's gradual assimilation of the rich heritage of classical Tamil architecture" Eaton 2005: 81.

[183] "they are typically not seen as processes at all, ones through whose dialectical interaction the global and the local are brought into being simultaneously and continuously. Rather they tend to be thought of as pregiven, stable, and sharply defined – the global or cosmopolitan as the exogenous, great tradition over against the local or vernacular as the indigenous, little tradition. They have taken on the character of stable entities that interact in thinglike ways, rather than being seen as constantly changing repertories of practices." Pollock 2006: 11.

3.2 Language of Politics

These larger inquiries frame the following ethno-historic analysis of Kṛṣṇadevarāya and his powerful empire. Similar questions seem to have prompted Wagoner to offer a fresh new interpretation of the fascinating *biruda* or honorific title attributed to the king of Vijayanagara – *hindu-rāya-suratrāṇa*, a Sultan Among Hindu Kings, or as we will see later a Sultan *for* or *of* Hindu Kings. That study was further supplemented by Richard Eaton's 2005 publication of *A Social History of the Deccan 1300-1761 Eight Indian Lives*, an excellent work that situates the discussion in the geo-cultural and political context of Deccani studies. According to Eaton's characterization, Vijayanagara would be classified as a Hindu state system functioning as a transregional sultanate, effectively transforming the "king" into a "sultan".[184] In other words, the emperor of Vijayanagara truly became a Sultan of Hindu Kings. Kṛṣṇadevarāya was thereby a political link, and in a sense, a religio-cultural bridge between the hegemonic forces of the northern Deccan and the predominantly regional territories of the southern peninsula.[185] This was an age when:

> political frontiers knew no boundaries based on kingship, language, religion, or any other cultural marker. In fact, the sultanate knew no natural boundaries at all, save that point in space beyond which revenue could not feasibly be collected. This principle, combined with their use of highly mobile units of mounted archers, gave sultanates an enormously elastic and transregional character, in contrast to the more compact and territorially constricted regional kingdoms.

It was also the time of the sultan, a term for a secular sovereign who could separate temple, mosque or church from state:

> "The Arabic tern *sultan*, meaning literally "might," or "strength," referred to one who wields worldly power, as opposed to one who possesses religious authority. In reality, the sultanate form of polity anticipated by many centuries the ideal of secular government as theorized in early modern Europe, since in principle it separated religion from statecraft. Indeed, this heritage permitted Indian sultans – whatever their personal religion might have been – to claim the role of universal sovereign over, and supreme protector of, ethnically diverse subject peoples.[186]

Kṛṣṇadevarāya was clearly a potentate with an ethnically, religiously and socially diverse dominion. And although some of this heterogeneity was due to a northern influx of Islamic

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[184] Also: "Helping to facilitate the transmission of the sultanate idea from Indo-Turkish Muslims to Deccani Hindus was that idea's profoundly secular basis: being or becoming a sultan, or being subordinate to one, said nothing with respect to one 's religious identity." Eaton 2005: 32.

[185] In regard to the Deccan as a diverse cultural zone, it is fascinating to note that even the celebrated Persian chronicler Ferishta(d. 1611) adopted a formulation that abandoned geographic demarcations in lieu of linguistic ones: "One of the four sons of India ("Hind"), he writes, was "Dakan, " who in turn had three sons: "Marhat, Kanhar and Tiling" – that is, areas native to speakers of Marathi, Kannada and Telugu. "Presently, these three communities (*qaum*) reside in the Deccan." For Firishta, as indeed for twenty-first-century residents when queried on the matter, the Deccan comprises the territory today constituted by three linguistically defined states: Maharasthra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh."

[186] Eaton 2005: 23-4.

peoples and cultures, there was quite a powerful socio-political transformation underway in the south as well – a shift in the nature and make-up of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's own landed nobles.

Overall there is no doubt that the king was governing over a dynamic pre-modern society pervaded with what Eaton deems "an egalitarian social ethos," in which "birth-ascribed caste rankings were notably absent...a social landscape remarkably unaffected by Brahmanical notions of caste and hierarchy".[187] And although Kṛṣṇadevarāya was personally attached to an idyllic model of a brahmanically ordered society divided into four convenient classes[188], his policies of practical governance were based more on loyalty, trustworthiness and skill rather than birthright or heritage. In fact the shifting nature of occupational elites during this period can be viewed as the root cause of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's more universalized social policy. Several scholars have commented on the mobile nature of the elite segment of early medieval Deccani society, and this analysis is all the more true for sixteenth Vijayanagara where these transformative processes had been underway for well over two centuries. Soon after the fall of Pratāpa Rudra at his Kākaṭiya capital of Warangal in the early fourteenth century, seventy-two warlords or *nāyakas* united under the banner of one Prolaya Nāyaka who reclaimed control of Warangal and the surrounding territories. His successor would later defeat the foreign governor Malik Maqbul and claim the title *āndhra-suratrāna*, Sultan of the Āndhras. These same warrior clans would later come to form a critical political base in the Vijayanagara state system, not only in the Deccani hinterlands but also in the center at the empire's capital. This socio-cultural transformation, or more specifically Teluguization if you will, of South Indian polities is fully corroborated by the insights derived from Cynthia Talbot's exhaustive study of Kākaṭiya-era Telugu inscriptions wherein non-brahmanical warrior elites were wrenching out a progressively larger share of the political power structure.[189]

In addition to these more urbanized warrior elites, S. Nagaraju elucidates a fascinating and "momentous experiment" underway in the southern Rāyalasīma region of Andhra country. A "new class of military leaders and mercenaries rising from various tribal-ethnic groups of the region had to act unitedly, cutting across their earlier tribal affiliations" in order to distinguish themselves from the then dominant Pallavas and Cāḷukya power zones.[190] In this regard, there seems no greater impetus for regional identity formation than the self-driven need to establish political independence through alterity,[191] a phenomenon that was evident even in the much earlier formation of *kāvya* as a new and independent genre[192], and could be argued as a more general principle of cultural evolution. According to Nagaraju this was the beginning of a Telugu consciousness, a claim diametrically opposed to by Narayana Rao who states: "there is

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[187] Eaton 2005: 15.

[188] For an example of this idealized formulation see AM II.33-36 where the king poetically describes the function and importance of each of the four *varṇas*. Also the "high-minded" people in verse IV.205 is a lenient translation of *brahmottara*, variously glossed by VVS as a proper society with brahmans at the top, or by TKR as a synonym for *rāja-nīti*.

[189] Cynthia Talbot's *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Religion, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (2001).

[190] Nagaraju 1995: 13.

[191] "Almost as a sociological law, any new class on the upward move begins to organize itself with a lifestyle and culture pattern that would not only provide it with an identity to distinguish itself from the commonality around it, but also help furthering its interests by way of opening up scope to operate in a larger social space. The nature of this re-formation is often determined by the choice the new class makes from the various options available to it." Nagaraju 1995: 12.

[192] Here I refer to Pollock's claim that *kāvya* developed in part as a reaction to alterior political influences such as the Śakas, the Kṣatrapas and the Kuṣāṇas, See Chapter 1.3.

no evidence of language serving as symbol of "national" identity before the nineteenth century. There were Telugu-speaking people, Telugu land, and even love of one's own language – but no Telugu people whose identity was formed by the "mother-tongue."[193]

Telugu Identity

Identity is a complex issue whose relation to the literary is made evident through the political. It is a multifaceted concept, deeply informed by the acts of reading, hearing, performing, reproducing and circulating literary texts; which, as has been argued earlier, inherently embody discourses of the socio-political.[194] In fact for Nagaraju it is this very "expansion of a new class of elites with a strong sense of Telugu consciousness that lead to the growth and development of Telugu literature."[195] For Kṛṣṇadevarāya his own poems reveal that he envisioned himself not as Telugu per say, but certainly as a king of South India. For example, in AM I.14 he calls himself *kannaḍa-rāya*, King of Kannaḍa[196] and in I.89 he describes "holding the Karnāṭa (land)" or *karnāṭa-dharā*. For a more explicit mention of Telugu identity we must turn to one of the most beloved poems of classical Telugu, *Āmuktamālyada* I.15 – a bold and unequivocal affirmation of linguistic regionalism and cultural distinctiveness.

In the meta-narrative that precedes the main poem, Kṛṣṇadevarāya describes spending the night at a Vaiṣṇava temple in the town of Śrīkākulam, deep within Telugu country, and home to a local god worshipped as Āndhra Viṣṇu. Here the king has a dream in which the god comes to him and commands him to compose a great poem in Telugu. The god goes on to speak the following famous words:

tĕlugadela yanna deśambu tĕlugenu
tĕlugu vallabhuṇḍa tĕlugŏkaṇḍa
yella nṛpulu kŏluvan ĕṟugave bāsāḍi
deśa-bhāṣalandu tĕlugu lĕssa

"If you ask, 'Why Telugu?'
It is because this is Telugu country
and I am a Telugu king.
Telugu is one of a kind.

After speaking with all your lords at court,
didn't you realize –
among all the regional languages,
Telugu is the best!

Here we have clear references to a Telugu country (*deśambu tĕlugu*) and a Telugu sovereign (*tĕlugu vallabhuṇḍa*) and therefore, very sure evidence that the term *tĕlugu* was a marker of linguistic, geographic and cultural identity. The last line, quoted by Telugu speakers everywhere

[193] Narayana Rao 1995: 25.
[194] Pollock 2006: 28.
[195] Nagaraju 1995: 14.
[196] Here the interpretation of the compound must be taken as a *tat-puruṣa samāsa* and not as "a Kannaḍa king". It is important to remember that the term *kannaḍa* at this time refered to much of peninsular South India, including most of Telugu-speaking Āndhra country.

as a motto of great regional pride, acutely points out Telugu's position of comparison not to Sanskrit, but specifically to other *deśa-bhāṣalu* or regional languages. Narayana Rao seems to miss the point when he states: "Nor was there an opposition between one regional language and the other."[197]

The penultimate line of the verse references the "lords at court," and is a direct reference to the socially mobile warrior elites that populated Kṛṣṇadevarāya's governing body. Rather than Tamil or Kannada, the choice for this Vijayanagara king was Telugu, a decision that was definitively political.[198] He was reaching out to the people of his court (and beyond) – a constituency that was dominated by Telugu speaking Brahmans, poets, warrior elites and subordinates. This was the sixteenth century "by which time Vijayanagara had already annexed Andhra south of the Krishna River, in the process assimilating Telugu warriors of that region as subordinate rulers. Even Vijayanagara's central court had by that time taken on a distinctly Telugu character."[199]

3.3 Court of Culture, Culture of Court

The "Teluguness" of court was certainly promoted and propagated through the robust patronage of courtly literature. And although Kṛṣṇadevarāya sponsored works in Tamil, Kannada and Sanskrit, Telugu was the primary literary language of his court. Given the so-called Islamicization of the Vijayanagara court it is surprising that we have no evidence of the king commissioning works in Persian or Arabic. It seems, therefore, that the "language of Islam"[200] was, at least at this time in the Deccan, a medium of political rather than literary currency. The sixteenth century was the time of Telugu literary ascendancy and Kṛṣṇadevarāya's court was its epicenter. In the preceding half millennium, poets like Nannaya, Tikkana, Śrīnātha, Potana and others laid the foundation for what is often remembered as the Golden Age of classical Telugu literature.

The Vijayanagara capital is said to have been graced with eight master poets[201] – the legendary *aṣṭa-dig-gajas* or Elephants of the Eight Directions – who recited fine poetry,

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[197] Narayana Rao 1995: 25. The following excerpt from Nagaraju's study is particularly relevant because it clearly positions Telugu in relation to the "cultivated" language of Sanskrit, but also in preference to other Dravidian languages. He states: "the choice of Telugu to become the vehicle of the newly emerging classes here, it was a conscious choice. It was done deliberately, going against the normal practice of simply copying the well cultivated language and style already current among those who are politically powerful or culturally advanced; despite the fact Telugu at that time had not geared itself for the requirements of the higher level of state or social organization emerging then, the local elite avoided the easy choice of adopting Kannada or Tamil, the language of Karnataka or Pallava suzerains with whom they had close interaction, or even Sanskrit, the language of administration and culture used in other parts of the Telugu country itself. Telugu was to serve a larger purpose than simply being a medium for official usage. This choice suited their immediate need and promoted their ultimate goals. A recognizable regional/ethnic consciousness began to surface; the tool used (Telugu) became the symbol of their unity and identity." Nagaraju 1995: 14.

[198] See Narayana Rao's discussion of this verse in *Coconut and Honey: Sanskrit and Telugu in Medieval Andhra* 1995.

[199] Eaton 2005: 29. Interestingly, in later times "…when Telugu-speaking Nāyakas ruled a predominantly Tamil-speaking area of South India, Telugu acquired a status almost similar to that of Sanskrit in the preceding centuries." Narayana Rao 1995: 35.

[200] For further discussion see Muzaffar Alam's *The Languages of Political Islam* (2004).

[201] A traditional list of the eight poets along with their major works: Allasāni Pĕddana (*Manu Caritramu*), Nandi Timmana (*Pārijāta Apaharaṇamu*), Mādayyagāri Mallana (*Rājasékhara Caritramu*), Dhūrjaṭi (*Śrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyamu* and *Śrī Kāḷahastīśvara Śatakamu*), Ayyalarāju Rāmabhadra (*Rāma Abhyudayamu*), Piṅgaḷi Sūranna

extemporized on various literary challenges and displayed great wit and erudition in heated contests of poetic skill. The literary debates in particular were opportunities for court poets to interact, argue and ultimately curry favor with their sovereign. It was also a time when rival poets from neighboring courts could be challenged and defeated in the open, like the legendary defeat of Gauḍa Diṇḍima Bhaṭṭu at the hands of Śrīnātha some decades earlier at the Vijayanagara court of Harihara II. This kind of battle of the poets was common to the old Sangam tradition[202], and is also well described in *Āmuktamālyada* on two occasions: Viṣṇucitta's debate in Chapter III and Yāmunācaraya's victory in Chapter IV. Take for example this passage in which Viṣṇucitta takes the king's permission before dismissing his scholarly opponents in a very public display of superiority:

> But after they spoke just a few petty words,
> Viṣṇucitta understood the depth of their intellect.
> He chuckled, looked over at the king's gentle countenance and said,
> 'If you act as an impartial intermediary,
> we might be able discuss a few things.'
>
> And with the king's permission,
> in the middle of the ensuing debate,
> Viṣṇucitta turned and faced the lead debater
> and asked 'What was it that you said?'
> Then he repeated everything that the scholar had propounded earlier
> and calmly pointed out the fault in each of his arguments.
>
> Some could not understand his reasoning, so one by one
> he patiently explained the rationale behind each of his critiques.
> The assembly became agitated and burst into an uproar,
> but he reconciled them all and gained their support.
>
> In this way, Viṣṇucitta challenged the other debaters
> and one by one, defeated them all.
> Then he turned back to the first scholar
> and like a conqueror to the conquered,
> compassionately let him go.
>
> Viṣṇucitta had proved his mastery of *śruti, smṛti* and *sūtra*
> and having established the Truth with just one voice,
> he proclaimed his faith to the world![203]

(*Kaḷāpūrṇodayamu* and *Rāghava Pāṇḍavīyamu*), Rāmarājabhūṣana (*Vasu Caritramu*) and Tĕnāli Rāmakṛṣṇa (*Pāṇḍuraṅga Māhātmyamu*).

[202] cf. Puṟ. 47. Like the old *pāṇaṉs* who maintained the power of the king – "the king had to remain in an auspicious condition if his rule was to be prosperous; he had to maintain that condition through the help of the Pāṇaṉs and others (which is why they, and not he, were low: they controlled his power, while he merely possessed it), through his just rule, and his heroism." Hart 1975: 136. The main difference here is that the *pāṇaṉs* were low caste and the Vijayanagara poets were high caste Brahmans, a perfect example of how old Dravdian notions of kingship were being assimilated to the Sanskrit model of a *dharmic* king.

[203] AM III.5-7.

These scholarly debates among court literati created an air of cultural refinement and prestige. And for a king of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's magnificent stature, an equally grand display of cultural clout was essential for his imperial image.

The king's beloved poets were graciously seated in the famed Bhuvana Vijayam or Hall of Victory,[204]and represented not only the cultural but the political importance of literary patronage, and in particular a new vernacular literariness and textuality.[205] The well-known Sanskrit conceit of a *dig-vijaya* or conquest of the directions is here directly linked with the growth and expansion of a new vernacular idiom. As Pollock adds: "vernacularization was typically initiated and promoted from the center of the polity [cf. Nagaraju 2005], at the court of the ruling lord…the literary vernacularization of the court entailed the court's political vernacularization; the king's representation as epicized hero was an effect on the literary-narrative plane of a growing localization of political imagination and practice."[206] Kṛṣṇadevarāya, as both patron and poet, was certainly at the heart of this nexus of language and politics. And just as the guardian elephants were believed to hold up space, Kṛṣṇadevarāya's legendary poets supported him and his imperial program. It seems only logical that the apex of imperial Vijayanagara power coincided with zenith of the Telugu literary tradition. It is important to bear in mind, that like the semi-mythologized narrative of Nannaya's inception of classical Telugu literature, the glorified peak of this tradition is also, to a certain (though arguably lesser) extent, crystallized by post-facto imaginations. As Narayana Rao and Shulman make clear, "it seems likely that this schematic vision is itself derived from a seventeenth century retrospective ordering of previous works in a manner that first produced the idealized image of a Golden Age."[207] Part of the following discussion is to explore this constructed image of a mighty literary emperor, but also reveal how much of this invented memory was based on very concrete and well-substantiated historical realities.

The Kavi-Rāja

The center of Vijayanagara's great literary consortium was the emperor Kṛṣṇadevarāya, not only in terms of being the royal patron and passive recipient of gratuitous praise, but also as a very active member of the literary circle. He wholeheartedly relished the complex productions of his brilliant court poets, and even composed and recited his own difficult poems. This king was not only a great military strategist and statesman (see Section 3.9), he was also a talented

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[204] Listen to Paes' fascinating corroborative memory: "This building stands on pillars shaped like elephants and with other figures , and all open in front, and they go up to it by staircases of stone; around it, underneath, is a terrace (*corredor*) paved with very good flagstones... This house is called the House of Victory, as it was made when he king came back from the war against Orya..." Sewell 1972: 263. cf. *Manu Caritramu* I.13 where explicit mention is made to the Bhuvana Vijayam.

[205] There was also a good deal of intertexuality shared among the poets at court. There are many passages in *Āmuktamālyada* from *Manu Caritramu*, a work expressly commissioned by the king. There are also several stories relating to Timmana's inspired composition of *Pārijāta Apaharaṇamu* (see NRS 178-9), the story of Satyabhāma that yields a curious appearance in AM V.74. There is also Kṛṣṇadevarāya's daughter Mohanāṅgi's own work *Mārīci Pariṇayamu* which mentions that "my father is writing the story of Viṣṇucitta."

[206] Pollock 2006.

[207] NRS 9. See also NRS 166 and 178. Important here is the *Rāya-vācakam* or Tidings of the King, an anachronistic production of the Tanjavūr court that gives credence to the growing mythologization of Kṛṣṇadevarāya and his court. See Introduction in Wagoner 1993.

scholar and first-rate poet, a premodern epitome of the *kavi-rāja* or poet-king. His own clever verse from the preamble[208] to *Āmuktamālyada* reads as follows:

> *prabala rājādhirāja vīra pratāpa*
> *rāja parameśvarārdha durgā-naṭeśa*
> *sāhitī-samarāṅgaṇa sārvabhauma*
> *kṛṣṇarāyendra kṛti vinirmimpum anari*

> And the pandits cried –
> "O mighty lord, king of kings
> supreme sovereign of heroic splendor!
> United like the Highest God
> half the goddess Durga, half the Lord of Dance
> Emperor in the fields of war and letters!
> O Kṛṣṇadevarāya, compose this epic poem!"

This verse, skillfully placed in the voice of his courtiers, employs the famous line *sāhitī-samarāṅgaṇa sārvabhauma*, or universal emperor in the fields of war and letters. In this regard Kṛṣṇadevarāya is keenly self-aware of his position and high achievement in both disciplines.[209] The poem further reflects his very pointed desire to project this integrated image of himself as warrior-poet to the world.

The concept of a poet-king was quite common to Sanskrit notions of kingship and certainly spread to most parts of India as part of the Sanskrit cosmopolis. The famous example is \Bhoja, the semi-legendary Pāramāra king who ruled half a millennium earlier from his capital Dhārā in the Mālava country. The legends surrounding King Bhoja and his court of cultural refinement seems to have set the standard for the synoptic *kavi-rāja* and it is not surprising that Kṛṣṇadevarāya was commonly known as Abhinava-Bhoja, "the New Bhoja," Sakalakaḷā-Bhoja "Bhoja in All Arts", and simply Āndhra-Bhoja, a title that very much reflects the localized vernacularization not only of language but ideologies as well.[210] Kṛṣṇadevarāya was very consciously drawing on these ideas and through his literary creativity he defined a certain "Sanskrit civility" and conception of enlightened kingship that would emanate outward from his central court at Vijayanagara.

It is certainly true that even during the vernacular period kings nurtured a desire to demonstrate their Sanskrit virtuosity in literary matters. The *Mānasollāsa*, a twelfth century

[208] This section known is the *vaṁśa-stuti* or praise of lineage and is largely taken verbatim from Allasāni Pĕddana's *Manu Caritramu*. Some scholars see this as a reason to believe that Pĕddana wrote *Āmuktamālyada*, but most literary scholars agree that this is not the case. The king does add a few unique verses about his historic exploits that have no parallels in *Manu Caritramu* or Nandi Timmana's *Pārijāta Apaharaṇamu*, including the verse above (cf. AM I.42).

[209]The poet-king uses a series of *double entrendes* to stress his dual persona. He envisions himself as a *parameśvara* or great lord, but also Lord Shiva who is invoked here as *ardha durgā-naṭeśa*, a composite form of Highest God that embodies the goddess Durgā (forts) and the god Naṭeśa (Master of Art). In a Kannada inscription from 1529 found in the Laxṣmi Narasiṁha temple near modern day Hampi, the king is described as *saṅgīta-sāhitya-samarāṅgana-sārvabhouma*, thereby adding music to the list and making a distinction between arts and letters. Furthermore, a coronation inscription in Kannada, inscribed at the Virūpākṣa temple at Hampi and dated January 24, 1510, describes the king (even at this early stage of his career) as *kāvya-nāṭaka-alaṅkāra-marmena*, one who knows the secrets of poetry, drama and aesthetics.

[210] cf. *Manu Caritramu* V.105 where the poet-laureate Pĕddana directly compares Kṛṣṇadevarāya to the celebrated historical King Bhoja.

Kannada text for example "demonstrates how literary-theoretical competence (*śāstravinoda*) was as central to kingliness as military competence (*śastravinoda*)." Furthermore, "Sanskrit learning itself became an essential component of power. The figure of the learned king became quickly established, especially the king learned in Sanskrit philology…the topos of the educated king…became virtually mandatory for the fully realized form of kingliness."[211] Kṛṣṇadevarāya was certainly no exception, in fact he was an exemplar of this ideal, and one verse from *Āmuktamālyada* vividly describes his erudite capacities in Sanskrit composition.

> 'You composed the *Story of Madālasa* and the *Pleasures of Satyabhāma*
> and delighted connoisseurs with your natural usage
> of hyperbole, metaphor, subtle suggestion and sarcasm.
> You selected the best episodes from the Vedas and the Purāṇas
> and compiled the *Abridged Essence of All Stories*.
> With great poetic skill you wrote the *Jewel of Wisdom*
> that could dispel the sins of any listener,
> and your *Handbook on Aesthetics*
> was praised by scholars for its sweet poetry.
>
> All of these works you wrote in Sanskrit[212],
> but is it impossible to compose poetry in Telugu?
> Create a great poem in Telugu for my pleasure![213]

This verse is again taken from the dream sequence that frames the text. Āndhra Viṣṇu lavishly praises the king's skills in Sanskrit, but in the end, he commands, almost challenges him to compose in Telugu (*ŏkka kṛtin vinirmimpumu)*. This is nothing short of a royal/heavenly proclamation of vernacular ascendancy in both literary and political terms. Therefore, as much as Sanskrit was a linguistic vehicle for conceptualizing and making sense of the modes, norms and expressions of political power in premodern South Asia, the vernacular revolution was in fact promoting as well subverting Sanskrit models.

3.4 The Dravidian King

As much as the medieval rulers of South India were influenced by kingship models derived from the Sanskrit tradition, they were also drawing on indigenous ideals of kingly conduct derived from ancient Tamil culture.[214] In both these instances courtly literature was the primary means by which these regnal archetypes were articulated. Just as Sanskrit was deployed as a means of explicating forms of political consciousness and culture, so too had the rich *puṟam* poems of ancient Tamil used to do the very same thing. The production of praise literature by court poets centered around the king did not only constitute a transaction of material powers, but more essentially a "celebration of aesthetic power."[215] These court practices were in fact the

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[211] Pollock 2006: 15, 166.
[212] He also composed the *Jambavatī Pariṇayam* in Sanskrit which includes a colophonic verse with the king's authorial stamp. Sistla also includes another Sanskrit text, the *Uṣā Pariṇayam* which has never been published.
[213] AM I.13.
[214] For a more detailed survey of the modes and accoutrements of Dravidian kingship see Hart 1975: 13-20 and 86-93.
[215] Pollock 2006: 14.

articulation of meanings of power, and proved to be extremely influential in terms of creating a new political order, explicitly embedded as they were with an aesthetic of power. These modes have been discussed in Chapter I and support the idea that poets, to a lesser or greater extent, created kings. They praised lineages, told of heroic deeds and generally spread the fame of their patron. Furthermore, the mobility of texts, and the itinerant nature of bards and court poets promoted a discursive circulation of political ideals, both Sanskritic and Dravidian, throughout peninsular India.

"In ancient Tamil society, the king was the central embodiment of the sacred powers that had to be present and under control for the proper functioning of society."[216] The king's duty was to protect his people from invaders, destroy enemies, and just as importantly, ensure a fruitful harvest by using his powers to prevent droughts and provide plentiful rain. The world is a chaotic place, filled with turbulent forces which can only be controlled by a dutiful king. The good sovereign brings *order* to the world, as in this poem from *Āmuktamālyada*:

> While the Pāṇḍya king rules, the land is prosperous
> protected from each of the six deadly plagues–
> Parrots chained with necklaces are kept in pet cages,
> while locusts are scorched by our king's splendor.
> Rats infest mansions deserted in conquered cities
> while droughts are relieved
> with the musth that flows from fallen elephants.
> Rival kings rattle on our king's anklet,
> and flooding is turned into royal giving,
> generously flowing from our king's hand.[217]

3.5 Body of the King

Underlying this regnal duty was a deeply held notion that there existed a strong symbiotic relationship between the king and his subjects. In this sense the old Sangam kings quite literally represented the *body politik*. Kṛṣṇadevarāya seems to be invoking the same ancient bond of royal responsibility when he claims:

> A king must listen to the cries of the destitute
> and care for their needs,
> while never entrusting such serious matters to cowards.
> He must always be ready to protect his people,
> for if a king keeps the welfare of the people in his heart
> the people will care for the welfare of the king.
>
> What's the benefit in this you might ask?
> When people are high-minded and united in their desires,
> won't God Who Resides in the Souls of All Beings be giving?[218]

[216] Hart 1975: 13.
[217] AM II.43 and Note II.43.

[218] AM IV.204-5.

In the case of Kṛṣṇadevarāya who was both poet and sovereign, we have a fascinating nexus that reveals a highly personalized expression of kingliness and statehood. The prosperity of the state (*rāṣṭra-vardhana*) is in the king's heart (*ĕdan koru*), just as the welfare of the king (*rāja melu*) is with the people (*rāṣṭramu*). This symbiotic relationship between the king and his people forms the basis of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's governing policies. In fact he goes on to provide a beautiful extended metaphor in which care of the empire is likened to care of the royal body, or in a more general (and Foucaldian) sense, "care of the self."[219] He even seems to believe, as in the ancient Tamil sense, that there was a direct and equatable correlation between his physical maintenance and the sustenance of the empire.

A king should care for the empire like his own body
for the two are one.
    He should consult physicians, as he does ministers
        and cut back on feasting, as well as taxes.
    He should strengthen his muscles and reduce his fat,
        knowing the parts of his body like the wealth in his land.
    He should be oiled, massaged and bathed clean
        as if crushing and eliminating his enemies.
    He should maintain a good complexion and care for his teeth
        like a well-ordered society headed by brahmans.
The king should never forget to keep good health
for affecting his body effects the empire.[220]

These poems depict the body and soul of the king as reflective metaphors of the empire and its people. As Flood explains, "the ideals of Indic kingship were shaped by the idea of a constitutive relationship between the body of the ruler and the integrity of the polity."[221] The maintenance of the king's body then becomes a matter of state priority, and his daily exercise an issue of particular interest. A fine excerpt from Domingo Paes' account about Kṛṣṇadevarāya's morning routine is well corroborated by the king's own poetic production:

> This king is accustomed every day to drink a *quartilho* (three-quarter pint) of oil of *gingelly* [sesame or gingelly, from *emgellym*] before daylight, and anoint himself all over with said oil; he covers his loins with a small cloth, and takes in arms great weights made of earthenware, and then, taking a sword, he exercises himself with it till he has sweated out all the oil, and then he wrestles with one of his wrestlers. After this labour he mounts a horse and gallops about the plain in one direction and another till dawn, for he does all this before daybreak.[222]

Compare this to the king's charming poem about his quotidian schedule:

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[219] See Volume III "The Care of the Self" in Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1990).

[220] AM IV.270. Here is a further example (AM IV.244) that poetically depicts the king's sincere sense of duty (*kāryam*) in embodying the qualities he wanted reflected in his men:

A king must tolerate the boastful talk of his heroes, even though he is himself is a great hero
for that will make his men happy.
Isn't it the king's duty to see to that his own heroism, is reflected in his lords?

[221] Flood 85: 61.

[222] Sewell 1972: 249-50.

At dawn, before the physicians ask, "Did you sleep well?"
 a king should consult his brahman astrologers.
After this, he should meet with his accountants to discuss state finances,
 before assembling his ministers and lords.

In the middle of the day, before training with wrestlers and masseuses
 a king should chat with cooks, farmers and hunters.
And as the day turns, he should honor venerable yogis and righteous men
 before worshipping the gods.

Then, after eating, a king should enjoy old stories told by poets
 before being entertained by his jester.
And in the evening he should be with dancers and singers,
 and in the night, with his lover, before a good night's rest.[223]

Here Kṛṣṇadevarāya is seen interacting with people from a wide spectrum of social levels, everyone from the head priest to the house cook; with each part of the day designed to maximize the king's physical, intellectual and spiritual life. This poem comes at the end of the king's long section on political theory and constitutes a return to the central idea that a sound king makes for a sound empire. This was so much the case that even the king's gastronomic peculiarities factored into his socio-political ideologies, for variety was the spice of life (*nānāvidha ṣāḍabamul*):

The king's food should always be prepared
 with a variety of ingredients and flavors.
He should only eat in the late afternoon
 or when his stomach is empty
for it is important for a king to enjoy a big dinner.[224]

Gifts of the Body

The most common way in which the king expressed his gratitude for commendable service was to gift something from his own body, that is, to offer a part of himself. By giving away a jewel or necklace from his own person, the king was participating in an action that enabled a subject of the state to share in the body of the king.[225] This kind of 'imperial communion' was an important way for a king to connect with his people and in certain contexts with foreign kings.[226] Here is one passage from Nuniz that describes the king's bodily relationship with his honored lords:

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[223] AM IV.271.
[224] AM IV.281.
[225] Listen to Nuniz' account of discarded clothes: "the king never puts on any garment more than once, and when he takes it off he at once delivers it to certain officers who have charge of this duty, and they render an account;" Sewell 1972: 383.
[226] There was the practice of *khil'at,* or gifts of honor, in which royal articles were exchanged between Deccani sovereigns. "The objects presented in this ritual are best understood as "transactional" symbols, the exchange of which served on the one hand to bind giver and receiver together in a relationship of service, and the other to confer legitimacy to the donor and honor on the recipient." See Gordon 1994 in Wagoner 1996: 866. This practice was

> The greatest mark of honour that this King of Bisnaga confers on a noble consists of two fans ornamented with gold and precious stones...he gives them bracelets also.... The King confers very high honour, too, if he permits a certain one to kiss his feet, for he never gives his hand to be kissed by any one. When he wishes to please his captains, or persons from whom he has received or wishes to receive good service, he gives them scarves of honour [*pachari* for *pichhauri*?]; and this he does each year to the captains at the time that they pay him their land-rents.[227]

This "gift of a 'castoff' was considered to transfer something of the donor to the recipient, permitting him to share in the donor's authority." Or as sociologist Macel Mauss explains, when the exchange of transactional symbols includes "parts of the donor," the gift is of particular importance because it "creates an enduring bond between persons."[228] This was no mere token but a meaningful symbol of trust, loyalty and devotion. It seems rather logical then that the eponymous central character of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's epic poem is Āmuktamālyada, literally the "one who gives the garland that was (worn and) taken off."[229] Just as when one eats *prāsadam* at the end of a *pūja*, wherein the food has been consecrated by god's presence, the king was in fact a source of sanctification. Clearly the ideas of kingship and divinity were intersecting and a servant's loyalty to his lord was often viewed as paralleling the *bhakta*'s devotion to god, and vice versa. This important new development – the increasing deification of kings – will be explored next.

3.6 The God-King

The elevation of kings to god-like status was part of an evolving process that was paralleled by the domestication or rather humanization of the gods. This bidirectional movement worked in relation to and in conjunction with other pan-Indic processes such as vernacularization and the spread of *bhakti* ideals. Furthermore, the processes seem to function in fascinatingly interactive ways, and often with reverse polarities, when it comes to the Sanskrit versus Tamil traditions. In the north, as early as the Gupta period, much of Hindu mythology was crystallized so that by the "fifth century, Viṣṇu, Śiva, their families, minions, and enemies seem to have become as real as the human dynasties."[230] This makes a pointed comment on the modeling of deities (especially Viṣṇu) on the image of kings, their domains, actions and so forth, thus creating a cyclically influencing dynamic whereby the mythic and the historical, the philosophical and the political, were readily constituting each other. In other words, the political was inscribed by a divine mythos. The Guptas for example, "took the names of the gods, put the figures of Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu's consort, and Varāha, his incarnation as a boar, on their coins, and made mythology a state concern, enlisting particularly Viṣṇu and his heroic incarnations for their politics."[231] In this sense, the Sanskrit gods of heaven were making their way down to earth.

"well documented in the Indian sphere before the impact of Islam, but in the Vijayanagara period the practice was modified in such a way that it came into closer conformity with Islamicate practice."

[227] Sewell 1972: 376.

[228] Flood 76.

[229] Here is just one example from verse II.3 where this theme of royal gifting is mentioned: "In what city does the king don the finest green emeralds, only to pass them on to lesser lords?"

[230] Ramanujan 1993: 105.

[231] Ramanujan 1993: 104.

In the larger Dravidian context however, the opposite directionality is evident. In ancient Tamil society, sacred forces were present in the immediacy of human life, and in particular, the all important king. For example the old Tamil word for king *iṟaivaṉ* was later applied to god, and *koyil*, meaning house of the king or palace, now denoted a temple. Another example is the ritualized music played by the Kiṇaiyaṉs in the morning to wake up the king.[232] This ritual music is common to South Indian temples and the famous *suprabhātams* are played in many homes during the early morning hours. In essence, Dravidian models of kingship were increasingly and pervasively applied to the mythic gods of Sanskrit origin. And at the same time the *bhakti* revolution elevated simple saints to deific proportions as in the case of the great Āḻvārs. Later in the Nāyaka period that flourished after the fall of Vijayanagara, the king was equated to god himself with no intermediaries or ritual specialists needed to mediate his divine ruler.

In *Āmuktamālyada* it is interesting to note that the god Āndhra Viṣṇu calls himself a *vallabhuṇḍu* or lord who rules over a Telugu land or *deśam*.[233] Another clear marker of this trend is evident in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's own appellations. In the contemporary accounts of court poets, and even the king's own haughty colophons, we only find references to Kṛṣṇarāya. The inclusion of the honorific *Śrī* and the insertion of the deific *deva* into the king's name were certainly seventeenth century additions, imbued as they are with projected perceptions of nostalgia and reverence. And although both these terms were commonly deployed in the praise of Indic kings, the poems below evidence that the case of Kṛṣṇadevarāya was unique in that he appears to have been equated, at least in part, to the supreme god Viṣṇu. Here is a verse from the king's beloved poet laureate Allasāni Pĕddana in which the images of Viṣṇu and the patron-king are compounded:

Black glistens on his chest,
smeared with musk from Lakṣmī's breasts,
so his devotees – Sanandana and others –
might wonder
if he hasn't put Dark Earth
in Lakṣmī's place.
May this god favour
with his lotus-eyes
Kṛṣṇarāya, our king.[234]

In one example from the *vaṁśa-stuti* section of *Āmuktamālyada* the king's birth is praised by his court pundits as a divine occurrence.[235] He is described as *acyuta-āyata-aṁśaju śrīkṛṣṇarāya* or Śrī Kṛṣṇarāya born from (a great? part) of Viṣṇu.[236] Sistla offers the following translation: "O

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[232] cf. Puṟ. 225 where there is mentions of the *paṟai* drum (sometimes *muracu*) being beaten in the morning, accompanied by the blowing of ceremonial conches.

[233] See AM I.15 above. The current Āndhra Viṣṇu temple at Śrīkākulam dates back to the twelfth century but some scholars believe that its origins go back much further, built in the vicinity of an ancient capital city ruled by a king known as Āndhra Vallabha or Āndhra Viṣṇu, first ruler of the Āndhra people. "He is said to have ruled after overcoming his foe, Nisumbha, probably a powerful leader of the aboriginal (Nāga) tribes inhabiting this part of the Daṇḍakāraṇya. The same king, during course of time, came to be worshipped as Lord Āndhra Viṣṇu." Sistla 2010: 105.

[234] MC I.1 translated in Shulman 2001: 339.

[235] AM I.31, also in *Manu Caritramu* I.31.

[236] See gloss in TKR 31. The idea of an *aṁśa-avatāra* is important here and could relate back to the associations ascribed to the Āḻvārs. See Section 2.4.

Sri Kṛṣṇadevarāya, the complete incarnation of God Krishna!"[237] In so many ways Kṛṣṇadevarāya represents a landmark figure in the socio-political, religious and literary history of South India. And unlike other premodern sovereigns, we have quite an extensive array of historical materials both indigenous and foreign to understand his dynamic role in the Deccan. It is to a more detailed historical analysis of his life and achievements that we now turn our attention.

3.7 The Historic King

The detailed *vaṁśa-stuti* or praise of lineage in *Āmuktamālyada* (largely taken from Allasāni Pĕddana's *Manu Caritramu*) vividly describes the exploits of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's illustrious ancestors who founded and successfully expanded the mighty empire of Vijayanagara. By one estimation the king was born on January 17, 1471 to Tuḷuva Narasa Nāyaka and his second wife Nāgamba, supposedly a Tuḷu woman. According to Narayana Rao, "Kṛṣṇadevarāya was not born in the Telugu area. He was a Tuḷuva, from an area of southwestern Karnataka."[238] He further adds that, "in his own locality, Kṛṣṇadevarāya was only a peasant and, if legends are to be believed, a low-caste peasant at that."[239] There is some evidence to believe that Kṛṣṇadevarāya was not born at the capital or in coastal Tuḷu country, but rather further south in Devikīpura or in Udayagiri, in the borderland between Tamil and Telugu speaking regions. In fact he may have been named Kṛṣṇa in honor of the resident deity of that locality, a practice that was as common then as it is now. This tradition was evidenced earlier in the Vijayanagara royal lineage when Deva Rāya II's queen gave birth to their son while encamped at Śrīśailam, and thus was named Mallikārjuna after the famous godhead there.[240]

Kṛṣṇadevarāya's father Narasa Nāyaka is said to have been a "resident of the world-renowned Devakīpura" as is suggested by the poetic team Nandi Mallaya and Ghaṇṭa in their Telugu *Varāha Purāṇamu*, a work commissioned and dedicated to Narasa Nāyaka.[241] As Sistla explains, "Many scholars suggest that the Tuḷuvas were from the Tulu region in the west coast of Karnataka. According to *Varāha Purāṇamu*, however, the Tuḷuva kingdom was near Kāñci (I.24-26); and as a verse quoted at the beginning of this section suggest, Devakipuram was its capital (XI.137). Now this place is known by the name Devikāpuram, and it is in Tamil Nadu, but not in Andhra Pradesh or Karnataka." The text further describes the interconnectedness of the Sāḷuva and Tuḷuva hereditary dynasties. Members of the latter "were not called as the Tuḷuvas, but only as the inheritors of *tuḷuva-rājyam* or the Tuḷuva kingdom. Accordingly, the earliest known member of this lunar dynasty was Timma (Timma I). He married Devaki Devi of Devikāpuram."[242] What is clear is that Kṛṣṇadevarāya's origins were away from the center of political activity; he may have had some very strong southern influences and he was, in a sense, from the Vijayanagara fringe, both geographically and socially.

One legend speaks of a special night went Narasa Nāyaka witnessed a celestial vision, a shooting star perhaps, and was advised to spend the night with his queen. Unfortunately she was

[237] Sistla 2010: 145.

[238] Even as a geo-spatial reference, it is important to consider that much of Andhra country, especially the Deccan and southwesterly Rayalaseema regions, would have fallen under the broad expanse of Kannada country.

[239] Narayana Rao 1995: 25.

[240] Sistla 2010: 68.

[241] You, the resident of the world-renowned Devakīpura. You, the son of Īśvara
Born by the grace of the Lord of Śrīgireśa. You, the foremost general of the lord Sāḷuva Narasiṁha.
from *Varāha Purāṇamu* XI.137 in Sistla 2010: 70.

[242] Sistla 2010: 71.

unavailable and he made love to a maid servant, who would later bear the boy Kṛṣṇa. Another account claims that the maid-servant was in fact Nāgāmba, "a lamp-cleaner maid by name Nāgi"[243] Whatever specifics these apocryphal tales provide, it seems clear that Kṛṣṇadevarāya was associated with a low-caste, non-royal mother, a fact that seems to have caused internal tensions and dissensions at the royal court.

Kṛṣṇadevarāya's elder brother Vīranarasiṁharāya ruled from 1503-1509 and was eager at the time of his own death to coronate his young eight-year-old son. He is said to have commanded the minister Timmarasu to blind his younger half-brother. The loving Timmarasu however, who would later become Kṛṣṇadevarāya's most trusted minister, brought Vīranarasiṁharāya a pair of goat eyes and sent the young prince into protective exile.

Timmarasu liked the prince and looked after him like a father, as is well evidenced by Kṛṣṇadevarāya's affectionate appellation for the minister – *appa*, a possible link to a Tamil, rather than Telugu upbringing. Timmarasu saw to it that the young prince was well-educated, foreseeing the day when he would return to seize the throne. Evidence suggests that he could have sent the young Kṛṣṇadevarāya to Ahobilam, an important Vaḍakali *maṭh* and center of Śrīvaiṣṇava scholarship. The original *maṭh* was established in the late fourteenth century by one Kidambi Srinivasa (1378-1458) who assumed the title Ādivan Śatakopa Yati. This title was carried on by subsequent pontiffs and the seventh in the line, a contemporary of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's, was also the guru of the court poet Allasāni Pĕddana; thereby evidencing a very interesting link between the king, his poet laureate, and a strong foundation in Śrīvaiṣṇava theology.[244]

Whatever the circumstances of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's childhood were, it is certain that the young prince ascended the throne of Vijayanagara in 1509. Soon after his coronation he embarked on a series of brilliant military victories, an important facet of his reign that will be explored later in Section 3.9. Here we may pause to explore an important aspect of the king's personal life – his famous wives and his genuine love for them. The issue of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's wives, official or otherwise, has been a topic of vast and variegated speculation. According to Pĕddana's *Manu Caritramu*, Timmana's *Pārijāta Apaharaṇamu* and the famous bronze sculptures at Tirupati[245], the king seems to have had two principle wives, the royal Tirumala Devi and his beloved Chinna Devi. The king's daughter Mohanāṅgi describes herself as Tirumala Devi's daughter but characterizes her father as *chinnāmba-manohara*, the one who steals Chinna Devi's heart. The image of a central king flanked by two beautiful wives is of course analogous to the image of Lord Vĕṅkateśvara who keeps both Lakṣmi and Bhūdevi by his side. The idea that the god keeps a celestial wife and a terrestrial one plays out in their respective roles as official wife with political duties and intimate wife with a more sexualized

[243] Sistla 2010: 84.

[244] See MC I.6. The founding of the *maṭh* by a certain Śatakopa is also mentioned in *Āmuktamālyada* VI.66, see Sistla 2010: 46, 414-7.

[245] By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the "sculptural genre of placing approximately life-size royal figures in temple complexes" became widespread throughout South India. These sculptures were "stand-ins for the presence of the king" and were "intended to be seen not as a sculptural reminder of the king, but as the king himself." The South Indian temple was a central locus of community life, and the placement of royal sculptures within the premises of such sacred spaces, allowed the king to become a fixed and permanent part of the community. Branfoot notes that temple worshipers saw the king "both as devotee and a donor to the temple," and "the king's relationship with the temple's deities" as "a relationship crucial to the welfare of the kingdom…the body of god is identified with the body of the king, and also sculpture where the gods' mythic actions are equated with the political actions of kings." Branfoot 11, 13, 16 and 29.

role. This paradigm has been seen elsewhere throughout Hindu mythology all the way back to the Rāmāyaṇa and is highly prevalent in the South where northern gods were being naturalized to the Dravidian ethos. A perfect example is Murukaṉ/Śiva with his local, southern wife Vaḷḷi and her northern, Sanskrit counterpart Devayāni.

As with most Indian royals, both ancient and pre-modern, Kṛṣṇadevarāya had many more concubines, if not official wives. Of these there is the famous daughter of the Gajapati king, variously identified as Kamala, Lakṣmi, Jaganmohini, Annapūrṇa Devi, or even the famous Tukkha who wrote a set of five love-hate poems.[246] Whether or not these women are all one individual, all separate, or a combination is impossible to determine. The importance of these women in his life is commented on by Sistla when he says, "To my knowledge, no poem in Telugu dedicated to a mortal, prior to the ones dedicated to Kṛṣṇadevarāya, mentions the names of the wives of the patron…[and] no Telugu poet, prior to the emperor-poet, had mentioned his wife or wives in his work."[247] What is critical is that Kṛṣṇadevarāya seems to have genuinely loved many women – he sought them out for political as well as romantic reasons, and it is clear that these amorous feelings were being expressed in his romantically charged poetry.

3.8 (Auto)biography

With this brief sketch of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's birth and family based on various textual materials, we begin to build a case in understanding the king's own *Āmuktamālyada*, not only as a beautiful poem about a saint, but as a self-representing allegory. All writing is to some degree autobiographical and *Āmuktamālyada* is no exception. As Thomas Carlyle has poignantly said, "There is no heroic poem in the world but is at bottom a biography, the life of a man; also it may be said, there is no life of a man, faithfully recorded, but is a heroic poem of its sort, rhymed or unrhymed." In many ways *Āmuktamālyada* is a poetic hagiography embedded in an allegorical autobiography; it functioned as a vehicle for the king to proclaim his devotion for the Śrīvaiṣṇava faith while simultaneously expressing the romantic love within his heart. Sistla, in his afterword "As I See It" makes the most convincing argument for this proposition.[248] Others like Shulman hint at a similar possibility when they describe the *Manu Caritramu* as an allegory for Kṛṣṇadevarāya's life and reign.[249] The work was by certain measure a poetic glorification if not justification of the king's humble heritage and rise to success, a composition that was expressly commissioned by the emperor himself and entrusted to his beloved friend and poet, Allasāni Pĕddana. I too view Āmuktamālyada in this mode of poetic "(auto)biography" and believe it to be a rich textual source for an empirical historicization of the king and his empire.

An autobiography is but a unique case of biography.[250] And although much of ancient history was told through the lives of these great men of the past, the production of critical academic biographies has had a much more checkered history. As Eaton suggests, in 1859 Karl Marx "signaled a virtual death sentence for the academic writing of biography." Historians then looked at identifying overarching socio-economic and political forces as the so-called 'movers

[246] See Shulman 2009.
[247] Sistla 2010: 87-8.
[248] Sistla 2010.
[249] Shulman 2009, also Sistla 2010: 72. In particular Sistla argues that the text's eponymous character, the primordial man Svārociṣa Manu is an allegory for the king. He correlates how a person of outwardly humble (i.e. mixed) origins rises to become a great king.
[250] See Introduction in *Telling Lives in India: biography, autobiography and life history*, edited by David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn, Indiana University Press 2004.

and shakers' of history. "But by the end of the twentieth century a new trend became visible. In the 1980s and '90s some scholars had begun to view biography not as a genre inherently antithetical to social history, but as a vehicle that could be recovered and mobilized for writing precisely such history." According to Eaton then, (auto)biographies have been resurrected as *bona fide* sources for the constriction of positivist historical narratives. Taking this with Thomas Carlyle's idea that "history is the essence of innumerable biographies,"[251] we begin to see how critical biographies are productive materials in the pursuit of understanding the larger arcs of human civilization.

Much of the information that we have about Kṛṣṇadevarāya is based on the detailed chronicles of two Portuguese merchants who visited the capital of Vijayanagara in the sixteenth century – Domingo Paes and Fernando Nuniz. By analyzing their writings and cross-referencing passages with poems taken from the *rāja-nīti* section of *Āmuktamālyada*, I hope to show that the Telugu text was an accurate and detailed account of Vijayanagara court life. In this sense, a text, even a poetic one, is an artifact – a literary event that records a time and a place that is at once both mythical and real. Even fantastical tales about gods and saints are rooted in a historical moment. They were 'written' or imagined so to say at a specific moment in the mind of an author. Like coins, inscriptions and ancient edifices, texts are material evidence for the construction of history, not only literary history, but civilizational as well.

In addition to using *Āmuktamālyada* as a source of historical data, I seek to establish with certainty a specific historical truth that I have tacitly accepted in my work, a position which has hitherto never been specifically scrutinized in a detailed historical manner, namely the veracity of the king's authorship. Most literary scholars believe, based on language usage and style, that the poem was not written by Pĕddana, but a rather unique literary voice unlike any other at the Vijayanagara court. As Narayana Rao and Shulman explain: *Āmuktamālyada* "is couched in a unique style, which jogs the listener's sensibility…this highly crafted style was beyond imitation; no later Telugu poets attempted anything like it."[252] His "Tuluness" surely contributed to his unique poetic diction and literary vision. Kṛṣṇadevarāya was coming from outside the established Brahmanic order of courtly poets, both in terms of his personal upbringing as well as his thematic inspiration. His bold literary vision represented a fresh new vitalization of the Telugu literary tradition which was now half a millennium old. In fact it his very alterity to the established norm that makes his work such a landmark in the evolution of Telugu poetry.

The only definitive textual proof of the emperor's authorship comes from his poetess daughter, Mohanāṅgi, who writes about her father's treatise in her *Marīci Pariṇayamu*. In what may be a remembered *cāṭu* verse[253] she claims that her father is composing the story of Viṣṇucitta (*viṣṇucittu katha raciñcu*) by taking all the best stylistic qualities from his court poets Allasāni Pĕddana, Mukku Timma and Pāṇḍuraṅga (Tĕnāli Rāmakṛṣṇa). This may be why the poem is often referred to by pundits as the *Viṣṇucittiyam*. Here is a translation of the verse offered by G.S.P. Rao on www.museindia.com:

> Like the flawless and tasteful verse of Allasani, woven strongly for a lingering effect,
> Like the tenderness of Mukku Timma's enchanting words,
> Like the exemplary structuring of the words of poet Panduranga,
> Have you composed Vishnu Chitta's story, O father!

[251] Thomas Carlyle in *On History.* Also Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1841: "There is properly no history; only biography."
[252] NRS 167.
[253] I have been unable to track this verse which finds mention by many Telugu pandits. See Sistla 2010: 108-9.

My salutations to you with devotion.

3.9 Historical Corroborations

The remainder of this chapter consists of a detailed series of textual correlations between the historical record provided by the Portuguese chroniclers and the political maxims of Kṛṣṇadevarāya embedded in Chapter IV of *Āmuktamālyada*. These verses, not translated in Chapter V, are a unique poetic addition to the text and offer a fascinating glance into the political mind of a celebrated premodern king of South India. His unique notions of political theory and statecraft are beautifully expressed here in high poetic fashion. And though here is no doubt that Kṛṣṇadevarāya saw himself as a *dharmic* king living in a brahmanically ordered world, it is clear that he was updating and refashioning his vision of governance to suit the needs and demands of the Deccan in the sixteenth century. These poems are not based on *śāstraic* knowledge like Kautilya's *Artha Śāstra*,[254] nor do they function like other sections of the poem, like the philosophical poems on Vedānta in Chapter III for example, where the poet exhibits his *pāṇḍitvam* or scholarship. Even a cursory reading of these poems reveal that they are inspired by the king's lived experience. And although they are presented as prescriptive injunctions of good governance, they are in fact descriptive reflections of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's reign. It is to this end that I view these verses as autobiographical source materials of Vijayanagara history.[255]

Before moving on to the military campaigns that form the bulk of the following section, it will be interesting to pause and consider the unique information that we have about the king's physical appearance and clothing. Unlike most other premodern figures of Indian history, we have a rather vivid first-hand account by Domingo Paes who spent quite some time in the king's presence. He records: "The king is of medium height, and of fair complexion and good figure, rather fat than thin; he has on his face signs of small-pox."[256] Interestingly, Kṛṣṇadevarāya's anatomical depiction is in strong contrast to the image of his likeness found in the sculptures of Tirupati and Chidambaram.[257] The following description of his attire and accoutrements, however, penned by himself no less, seems to be quite accurate.

A king should don a single gem,[258]
    whose luster shines throughout the world.
He should wear the finest clothes
    embroidered with sparkling silver,
and ornament himself with matching jewels

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[254] Pollock claims that the *rāja-nīti* portion of *Āmuktamālyada* "was derived from the *Śukranītisāra*, an archaic vision of polity composed perhaps a thousand years earlier," but clearly states later in his Note that the *Āmuktamālyada* "awaits serious analysis" that may "change our assessment." Pollock 2006: 422.

[255] Two rather literal English translations exist of these poems, both unpoetic renderings often fraught with misinterpretations and colonialist renderings. All the poems here have been freshly translated in consultation with two commentators VVS and TKR. See also Narayana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 2004.

[256] Sewell 1972: 246-7.

[257] Dehejia's comments on stylized portraiture are pertinent here: "verisimilitude certainly was not the ruling principle in commemorative portrait figures of aristocratic or royal ancestors. These stylized portrait statues and paintings...generic idealized aristocratic images that could equally well be portraits of any royal or aristocratic group...were presumably identified either by their exact placement in a chapel, monastery, or temple, or by their use in specific rituals such as birthday celebrations or death anniversaries." Dehejia 41, 45. And again Branfoot adds: "Realism and idealism are not absolute categories, however, and depictions of historical figures can still be considered portraits, even if idealized." Branfoot 14.

[258] Paes refers to "a *pateca* of diamonds on his neck of very great value" in Sewell 1972: 252.

according to the day of the week.[259]

The king's depiction is well corroborated by the Portuguese chronicles:

> There the king sits, dressed in white clothes [*panos bramcos*] all covered with (embroidery of) golden roses and wearing his jewels – he wears a quantity of these white garments, and I always saw him so dressed – and around him stand his pages with his betel, and his sword, and the other things which are his insignia of state. Many Brahmans stand around the throne on which rests the idol, fanning it with horsetail plumes, colored, the handles of which are all overlaid with gold; these plumes are tokens of the highest dignity; they also fan the king with them.[260]

The point is that the king's poems are in fact reliable sources of "hard" historical information. Being a section devoted to political theory, the following corroborations will further this idea by exploring aspects of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's foreign policy, domestic policy and interactions with enemy kings. Though I have focused on the literary talents of the poet-king, he was also a brilliant statesman, military strategist and fearless warrior. The Vijayanagara empire reached its zenith under his rule and the king was (by all accounts) victorious in every battle.

Foreign Policy

If a bordering king is weak, subdue him.
If he appears difficult to defeat, befriend him.
A bordering king is important
for his borders are your borders,
and the safeguarding of your frontiers depends on him.[261]

This poem encapsulates a dominant theme in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's foreign policy in regard to bordering Deccani kings. Simply put, he adopts a strategic military position that is devoid of religious discrimination. The various synonyms used for "enemy" in the poems apply equal to the Muslim Yavanas of the five Bahmani splinter states, and the *dharmic* Gajapatis of the eastern Hindu kingdoms. These two bordering enemies were not viewed as different, and a single foreign policy was implemented in regard to both. And though our idea of Hindu-Muslim relations may be clouded by nationalist, separatist and even extremist sentiments, Paes makes clear that Yavanas were housed in the capital and even employed in the king's personal guard: "At the end of this street is the Moorish quarter...and of these Moors there are many who are natives of the country and who are paid by the king and belong to his guard."[262]

These kinds of observations support the claim that there was a very porous border between the North and South Deccan, a channel through which military and bureaucratic elites could freely move in search of employment. It is interesting that the only religiously biased attitudes of this period seem to come from the newly arrived Portuguese, and this too from the

[259] AM IV.283.
[260] Sewell 1972: 269-70, cf. Lopes 106.
[261] AM IV.266.
[262] Sewell 1972: 256. See also Introduction, Wagoner and Talbot in *Beyond Turk and Hindu : rethinking religious identities in Islamicate South Asia*, edited by David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence 2000.

later chronicler Nuniz more so than Paes.[263] The medieval Deccan was dominated by three primary power-zones: the Narapatis (southern Deccan/peninsular south), the Aśvapatis (north/western Deccan) and the Gajapatis (eastern coast).[264] This triple axis of Vijayanagara-Bahmani-Gajapati would occupy much of the military history of the early sixteenth century Deccan. Here is one additional examples of the king's description of a singular foreign policy based on sound military stratagem. Of note are the poetic metaphors that serve to only enhance ideas rather than detract from them, and in no way making them less valid as historical source materials.

> When advancing towards the enemy's territory
> it is wise to begin with a few days of light marching,
> adding more and more troops as you move further along –
> like a thin trickle of water that grows into an overflowing river!
> If the enemy has a powerful army,
> it is wise to treat him with gifts and respect.
> If the reports of spies reveal that the enemy is weak,
> do not retreat, for it is best to surround him.[265]

Military Campaigns

The following section sketches out Kṛṣṇadevarāya's brilliant fourteen year campaign to subdue the Deccan and peninsular South India. "The string began in 1509, when at Koilkonda, sixty miles southwest of Hyderabad, Kṛṣṇadevarāya defeated the last remnant of Bahmani power, Sultan Mahmud, along with Yusuf 'Adil Shah of Bijapur, who was killed in the engagement."[266] A praise poem[267] from Chapter I of *Āmuktamālyada* evidences the gruesome nature of this defeat:

> The fine horses of your cavalry plowed the fields with their hooves,
> and the rushing elephants watered the earth with their downpour of juice.
> Hail Kṛṣṇadevarāya! With a fierce and unified attack,
> you turned those wild forests into fields of green,
> spreading your fame like the abundant crops of Kubera!
> You crushed the skulls of Khurasani warriors like melons
> and built a gruesome effigy with the Adil Khan's decapitated head![268]

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[263] As early as the seventeenth century, recollections of Vijayanagara from the Tamil south began to evidence a growing segregation of enemies based on religion. See "Demons of the Kali Age" in Wagoner's Introduction to *Tidings of the King* (1993) and numerous textual examples from the *Rāyavacakamu*. In this regard Kṛṣṇadevarāya again represents an apex of a universalized foreign policy that seems to have declined immediately after his reign.

[264] *Rāyavacakamu* in Wagoner 1993: 60-2.

[265] AM IV.247.

[266] Eaton 2005: 88.

[267] This verse is placed in the voice of the court's pandits. Unlike most of the other *vaṁśa stuti* verses that are taken from Allasāni Pĕddana's *Manu Caritramu*, this poems was penned by the king.

[268] AM I.42 Here the king makes direct reference to Edula Khān, or Yusuf Adil Khan, the ageing Bijapuri ruler. Ferishta does not repay this favor in his chronicles for there is scarcely a reference to Kṛṣṇadevarāya in his *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, let alone a specific mention of his name.

From this decisive victory the king turned southward to subdue the rebelling kings of the Tamil south. His victories over the Ummattūr chiefs at Pĕnukŏṇḍa, Śivasundaram and Śrīraṅgapaṭṭanam find no mention in *Āmuktamālyada* but sufficient local evidence suggests that he quickly quelled these uprising chieftains who had long been a central part of the Vijayanagara state system.[269] The remainder of the king's major battles were fought against his two great Deccani enemies the Yavanas and the Gajapatis.

Year	City/Battle/Fort	Sources from AM
1513	Udayagiri	I.89, II.101, IV.263
1515	Kŏṇḍavīḍu	II.101, IV.267
1517	Kŏṇḍapalli	III.93
1518	Siṁhācalam, Pŏṭṇūru	IV.235, IV.289, VI.140
1520	Raichur	IV.264
1522	Kĕmbāvi, Nirmanūru	V.161, VI.139
1523	Gulbarga	I.41

The following verses have been arranged chronologically according to campaign and constitute a combination of historically significant colophonic verses and political maxims. In many cases the details of specific battles are supported by citations from the Portuguese chronicles. In this process of textual juxtapositioning, I hope to highlight that the king's political verses, though prescriptive in nature, are in fact descriptive of specific historical events and lived personal memories. The startling correspondences herein support a view that poetry can be used for hard historical analysis; and, in the specific case of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *Āmuktamālyada*, that the king did indeed personally pen the verses of *Āmuktamālyada*. These examples provide ample points of evidence to convincingly conclude that the poem was inspired by Kṛṣṇadevarāya's vivid life experiences as a sixteenth century Deccani monarch.

Udayagiri 1513[270]

The hill fort of Udayagiri in southeastern Andhra was a major victory in the king's early conquests. Nuniz records that the siege lasted for a year and a half, and that the king's army was busy making paths up the rocky hilltop.[271] The siege is famous for the capture of the Gajapati's uncle, a story recounted by Narayana Rao and Shulman:

> "when Kṛṣṇadevarāya beseiged Udayagiri Fort, Prahareśvara Pātra, the Gajapati king's uncle, held it successfully for some days. Kṛṣṇadevarāya became impatient and took a vow not to bathe that day until he had stamped on his opponent's head.

[269] See *Sources* and *Further Sources* for copious information culled from local Telugu *kāfiyats* about these southern campaigns.

[270] Udayagiri was one of the three unyielding fortresses that Kṛṣṇadevarāya's father mentioned to him on his deathbed. The last wish of his father surely propelled the king's resolve to capture these strongholds. It wa also as mentioned earlier, the old king's home, and possibly Kṛṣṇadevarāya's own birthplace. Nuniz gives the following account: "At the death of that King [Narasa Nayaka] there remained three fortresses which had revolted from his rule, and which he was never able to take, which were these – Rachol and Odegary and Conadolgi, which have large and rich territories and are the principal forts in the kingdom." Sewell 1972: 308.

[271] Sewell 1972: 316-7.

Terrified, Prahareśvara Pātra sent his crown in lieu of his head, and Kṛṣṇadevarāya stepped on it and then bathed."[272]

And here are two of the king's poems, the first an injunction about vows (*pratina*) and the second a colophonic memory:

A king should be clever, not impulsive.
Never make a vow regarding the enemy
for an invasion can be stop and go for a long time,
and it may or may not be successful.[273]

I easily took Udayagiri Fort and seized the Karnata land in my firm arms.
The jeweled crown that the Gajapati's uncle offered as a precious gift
now lies sparkling at my feet!
This is the first chapter of heartfelt verses in the *Āmuktamālyada*,
offered to the world by me, Kṛṣṇarāya, supreme lord of the Earth![274]

Kŏṇḍavīḍu/Kŏṇḍpalli 1515-17

Along with Udayagiri, the hill fortress of Kŏṇḍavīḍu and the town of Kŏṇḍapalli were among the king's most significant victories against the Gajapatis. Although details of the larger Kaliṅga campaign are often mismatched, it is clear that after one of the sieges, Kṛṣṇadevarāya captured the Gajapati prince Vīrabhadra as well as the imperial Orrisan harem, which according to Nuniz, included the company of the queen:

"and taking and ravaging all the country which had no reason for expecting him, arrived at the city called Comdepallyr [Kondapalli]...and he laid siege to it, and remained there three month without being able to capture it, and in the end he took it...in which fortress he found many people of high rank whom he made captive, amongst whom was a wife of the King, and one of his sons who was a prince, and seven principal captains of the kingdom, all of whom he sent by road to Bysnaga."[275]

Again here are some verses from *Āmuktamālyada* with striking historical parallels evident throughout:

Like ornaments of the Earth,
the hilltop fortresses of Kŏṇḍavīḍu and Udayagiri
were seized by my powerful arms.
I spared the life of Vīrabhadra, the Gajapati's son
and captured all his relatives alive.
Lighting up the world with heartfelt verses,
this is the second chapter of my *Āmuktamālyada,*

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[272] NRS 43. According to TKR's commentary on AM III.93, the encounter with Prahareśvara was at Kŏṇḍapalli.
[273] AM IV.263.
[274] AM I.89.
[275] Sewell 1972: 319.

composed by me, Kṛṣṇadevarāya, supreme lord of the Earth![276]

The minister Prahareśvara and other were in the fort of Kŏṇḍapalli,
armed with strategic weaponry that touched the sky,
and protected by a battalion of Orissan soldiers.
With a snake-like sword in my hand,
I brilliantly seized the fort after an intense effort!
This is the third chapter of heartfelt verses in my Āmuktamālyada,
composed by me, Kṛṣṇarāya, famed throughout the world![277]

Conquer enemy territories
by taking control of their forts.
If the harem is seized, treat their women
in the custom of their native land.
In the presence of their ambassadors
never use harsh language
for there may come a time for reconciliation.[278]

Pŏṭṇūru 1518

In the Blue Hills of Pūri, under the protective gaze
of blue-robed Balarāma, Subhadra
and Lord Kṛṣṇa whose eyes are like blue water lilies,
I prepared for battle
and struck fear into the Gajapati's heart
with my powerful arms, pounding the drums of war.
This is the dazzling seventh chapter of heartfelt verses of Āmuktamālyada,
Giver of the Worn Garland, composed by me, Kṛṣṇarāya, lord of the earth![279]

Following the capture of Kŏṇḍapalli, the Gajapati king Pratāparudra was forced to flee to his capital at Cuttack, now in modern day Orissa. By this time Kṛṣṇadevarāya had advanced past the Krishna River and taken Vijayavāḍa, Rajahmundry and Siṁhācalam as he pursued his enemy northward along the Kaliṅgan coast.[280] Having conquered more enemy territory than he had initially planned to, Kṛṣṇadevarāya sued for peace as verse IV.267 above suggests. After paying obeisance to the Lord Narasiṁha of Siṁhācalam, Kṛṣṇadevarāya erected a victory pillar (*vijaya stambham*) at Pŏṭṇūru. He also made a solemn peace with the Gajapati king by taking the conquered king's daughter Annapūrṇa as his third official wife.[281] Nuniz gives the following account of the king's activities:

[276] AM II.101.
[277] AM III.93.
[278] AM IV.267.
[279] AM VI.140.
[280] The traditional northern boundary of the Vijayanagara empire was the Krishna River. In Kṛṣṇadevarāya's mind, anything to the north of it was not rightfully his.
[281] This practice of alliance-building through marriage was earlier practiced by Kṛṣṇadevarāya in the Tamil south when he married Tirumala Devi and pronounced her his chief queen. The king does not seem to employ this policy in regard to his Yavana enemies although this was a practice commom among the Vijayanagara and Bahmani elites of the past. As Eaton notes, Sultan Firuz Bahmani "gave high office to Brahmans, transformed Hindu chieftains into

And in this city [Symamdary, *i.e.* Simhacalam] he did many works, and gave alms to the temple[282] to which he gave much revenue.... And he commanded to engrave on it an inscription which says: – "Perhaps when these letters are decayed, the king of Orya will give battle to the King of Bisnaga. If the King of Orya erases them, his wife shall be given to the smiths who shoe the horses of the King of Bisnaga.[283]

The king corroborates the erection of a victory pillar but offers a somewhat less graphic inscription:

In Siṁhācalam I gained merit by making ritual offerings
of great devotion to the feet of the Lord of the Illusionary Lion.
I erected a victory pillar in Pŏṭṭunūru, a monolithic memorial
engraved with the eight syllables of my name –
the Divine King Kṛṣṇa Rāya![284]
This is the fine fourth chapter in my Āmuktamālyada,
filled with heartfelt verses that light up the world![285]

The pillar was a representation of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's power and sovereignty over the entire southern Deccan. Having erected it north of the Krishna River in heart of Gajapati territory, he now relinquished his rights over the newly conquered tracts. Kṛṣṇadevarāya returned all the land north of the Krishna to the Gajapati Pratāparudra and offered to marry the king's daughter as a symbol of peace and reconciliation. Again Nuniz offers us a clear account of the proceedings:

he made answer that he should arrange the marriage of his daughter with the King, and that afterwards the king would restore him his wife and lands...and he sent ambassadors to Bisnaga to arrange a marriage with his daughter, with which Crisnarao was well content; and when the King of Orya knew his will (in the matter) he sent him his daughter...and Crisnarao restored the lands on the other side of the river, and kept those on the hither side for himself.[286]

Below is yet another example of the poet-king's political theory and its reflection of a lived experience of governing:

After conquering an enemy, don't think –
"He caused me trouble in my time of trouble."
Refrain from violence

Bahmani commanders, and formed alliances with Telugu warrior lineages." Later in 1407 this same polymath sultan would marry the Hindu daughter of Deva Raya I. Eaton 2005: 48.

282 During a 2005 visit to the Simhacalam temple complex just outside of Visakhapatnam in northeastern Andhra, I a read an inscription that commemorated the king's gift of a priceless emerald necklace. Local priests added that this precious gift was stored in the temple vaults until a theft in the 1950s.

283 Sewell 1972: 319.

284 TKR cites the eight syllables as "*śrī-kṛṣṇarāya-nṛpati.*" I have not been able to identify this pillar but local residents of Simhacalam ensure me that it exists. They also claim that an Ashokan pillar from the third century BC still stands as a marker of the king's famous victory over the Kalingas.

285 AM IV.289. For further corroborative verses regarding Pŏṭṇūru cf. *Manu Caritramu* I.36 and I.38.

286 Sewell 1972: 320.

but seize his wealth and power,
for this kind of mercy inspires the enemy's faith.
What happens to a snake
when its fangs are ripped out?[287]

Although Kṛṣṇadevarāya did conclude a peace with the Gajapatis, he did not seem to adopt the same policy of reconciliation with his Yavana enemies to the north. This change of policy seems to be more in line with king's inflated ego and military arrogance rather than any shifts in cultural bias.

Raichur 1520

After his definitive conquest of Kaliṅga, Kṛṣṇadevarāya turned his military attention towards his fractured Yavana neighbors, particularly Ismail Adil Shah of Bijapur who was now in control of the long-contested city of Raichur, a prosperous fort town in the rich doab near the confluence of the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers. As Paes describes: "The *serras* reach as far as the kingdom of Daquem [Deccan], and border upon the territories belonging to the Ydallcão [Adil Shah], and upon a city called Rachol[288] [Raichur] that formerly belonged to the king of Narsymga; there has been much war over it, and this king took it from Ydallcão."[289]

The Deccani battle of Raichur is one of the most well documented military encounters in premodern South Asian history. The eye-witness-description of the battle and siege occupy a significant portion of Fernanao Nuniz' chronicle and although there are several interesting issues presented, I hope to summarize the events here and highlight certain salient themes relating to cultural stereotypes, elite mobility and strategies of war. It is of note that no mention of this battle exists in any of the Telugu sources, except for the single political verse quoted below that seems to be based on the specific events of this battle. This is also the sole battle that Ferishta mentions from this period, with the entire debacle being attributed to the sultan's frivolous love of the drink.[290] No mention is made of Kṛṣṇadevarāya or the events following the bloody engagement.

Nuniz' account of Raichur makes it clear to us that there was considerable diversity amongst the Deccani elites of the sixteenth century. He tells us about a certain Moor named Cide Mercar who was in the employ of the king:

> Now it happened at this time that the King (of Bisnaga) sent Cide Mercar with forty thousand pardaos to Goa to buy horses, which Cide Mercar was a Moor in whom the King of Bisnaga confided on account of various affairs with which he had already been entrusted;... fled from that place, Pomdaa, to the Ydallcão, carrying with him all the treasure...[291]

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[287] AM IV.235.
[288] On the contested geographical location of Rachol see H. Heras's fascinating six page paper *Krishna Deva Raya's Conquest of Rachol*, published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and London No.1, January 1931.
[289] Sewell 1972: 243.
[290] See Briggs 1892.
[291] Sewell 1972: 324.

It is also evident that there was significant dissension amongst the five Bahmani splinter states, especially a collective hostility towards Bijapur. In fact Kṛṣṇadevarāya seems to have garnered the support of the other sultans "from which lords he received answer that he was doing rightly, and that they would assist him as far as they were able."[292] There is no sense of religious prejudice in any of the king's actions. It is Nuniz, the foreign Christian from Portugal, who adds "that there never was any honesty in a Moor;" and in regard to the infighting of the Bahmanis he throws in the following parenthetical note: "(for there is little faith amongst the Moors, and they bite one another like dogs and like to see one after the other destroyed)."[293]

The actual battle began with the Adil Shah's preemptive crossing of the Krishna River and his bold morning attack on the encamped Vijayanagara forces. At first the king's troops were in disarray but he quickly rallied them to an outstanding victory:

> When the King saw the way in which his troops fled he began to cry out that they were traitors, and that he would see who was on his side; and that since they all had to die they should meet their fate boldly according to custom (*cavas e baudes*). 'Who ranges himself with me?' he cried. Immediately there thronged about him all those lords and captains that were ready to side with him, and the King said that the day had arrived in which the Ydallcão would boast that he had slain the greatest lord in the world, but that he should never boast that he had vanquished him.... Then he mounted a horse and moved forward with all his remaining divisions, commanding to slay without mercy every man of those who had fled.[294]

Rather than pursuing his enemy, Kṛṣṇadevarāya halted, his mind filled with feelings of remorse as he surveyed the sanguine riverbanks.[295] He then turned back to take the well-guarded fort of Raichur. This siege would have taken months perhaps but as it turns out, a group of Portuguese musketeers, led by a certain Christovao de Figueirdo, was in the area and quickly lent their able support.[296] Within a few hours the skilled marksmen eliminated all the Moorish turrets guards, not to mention the curious city captain who poked his head out to see what the fuss was all about.[297] The fort was quickly secured and Kṛṣṇadevarāya entered in triumph. Listen to the following verse by Kṛṣṇadevarāya that poetically describes the two-stage victory at Raichur:

> When a king presses an enemy army into a corner,
> there is no turning from heaven or victory!

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[292] He further adds that "the Ydallcão was hated by them all as being a more powerful chief than they." Sewell 1972: 326.

[293] Sewell 1972: 325-6, 324-5, 326. In regard to the "black" heathens he says: "With the coming of this news a tumult broke out in the camp, principally among them common soldiers, in whose minds suspicion was never wanting, and they still suffered under the terror inspired from old times by the Moors....they proposed to guard so well that none should take it, least of all, they thought, men who (in their [Moors'] eyes) were only blacks" Sewell 1972: 334. See also "and it seemed to him that he (the Ydallcão) ought not to trust the King, who after all was nothing but a black." Sewell 1972: 357.

[294] Sewell 1972: 338-9.

[295] Sewell 1972: 339-40.

[296] Figueirdo says to Kṛṣṇadevarāya that "this would be the greatest favour that he could do him, namely that His Highness should permit him to go and see the Moors." Sewell 1972: 343. And here "seeing" is nothing but a quaint euphemism for killing. See also Eaton's "'*Kiss My Foot,' Said the King: Firearms, Diplomacy and the Battle of Raichur, 1520*," Modern Asian Studies 43,1 (2009).

[297] Sewell 1972: 343-5.

There are mechanized weapons of various design
to penetrate rampart walls and send in troops.[298]

Nuniz' detailed account of Raichur provides much insight into the personality and nature of the king. He was bold, fearless, wise and beneficent. Take for example the treatment of the conquered peasantry where the king's practice of benevolence is noteworthy.

> There the citizens were standing waiting his arrival,... and they followed him with much loud shouting; crying – 'God be praised who has sent to save us after so many years!' and with these and other such words they begged him to spare them and have pity on them.... the King said that he would spare all their property, that they might freely act as they wished regarding both that and their persons, and those who wished to stay in the city might remain in their old state as before; and as for those who wished to depart they might do so at once with all that they have possessed.[299]

This somewhat glowing representation of the king is tempered with signs of his increasing megalomania.[300] Over a decade of stunning victories had turned the king into the ultimate Deccani sovereign, his empire was now expansive and his control of it firm.

The Road to Gulbarga 1522

After the battle of Raichur, a long series of negotiations transpired between Vijayanagara and the northern Deccani sultans. The end result was that Kṛṣṇadevarāya demanded that Ismail Adil Shah kiss the king's foot, and that if the defeated sultan was not willing to step foot on Vijayanagara territory, the king would oblige him by coming directly to his doorstep. The king thus embarked on his last major military campaign – a series of crushing victories in the cities of Kĕmbāvi[301], Nirmanūru, Sagara, Mudgal, Bijapur and Gulbarga. Here follow two poems from the king and a supplementary mention from Nuniz about the ruined Yavana mansions:

I, Kṛṣṇarāya, lord of the earth, gave true meaning
to name of Kĕmbāvi in the language of Āndhra,
for the water tanks here are crimson red,
filled with blood of Yavanas!
Standing at the front of my army, I toppled the high fort walls
that once blocked the path of rain clouds.
This is the fifth chapter of brilliant heartfelt verses
in my *Āmuktamālyada*, Giver of the Worn Garland.[302]

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[298] AM IV.264.
[299] Sewell 1972: 347.
[300] In reference to this striking personality trait, Narayana Rao and Shulman comment on Kṛṣṇadevarāya's boastful colophons: "The same self-confident, brazen excess runs through each of his verse and the book as a whole." NRS 43.
[301] This city remains unidentified. AM V.161 could be in reference to an earlier battle in 1513 at Kambampeta which involved both Yavana and Gajapati troops.
[302] AM V.161.

Near Nirmanuru, I, Kṛṣṇarāya, lord of the earth
stood at the front of my army,
and led a stampede of ferocious elephants against the Yavana king,
toppling his shining jeweled mansions that rise to kiss the sky.
This is the sixth chapter of the finest heartfelt verses
in my *Āmuktamālyada*, Giver of the Worn Garland.[303]

Nuniz collaborates the colophonic descriptions when he records that the king:

> went as far as Bizapor, which is the best city in all the kingdom of Daquem. It has numbers of beautiful houses built according to our own fashion... goodly city... but the city was left almost in ruins – not that the King had commanded it to be destroyed, but that his troops, in order to make fires for cooking, had torn down so many houses..."[304]

Gulbarga 1523

> He entered the kingdom of Daquem and marched against the city of Culbergura and destroyed it and razed the fortress to the ground, and the same with many other places.[305]

O Kṛṣṇarāya! In the fine city of Sagara and the capital Gulbarga
your battle sword slew the swift Yavana lords!
They filled Amarāvati with a raucous uproar
as they guzzled down honey-wine from heavenly trees.
They grabbed at the singsongy lute players,
breaking the strings like taught drawn bows.
Whenever they saw Rambha or the other apsaras,
they groped at their full round breasts.
And with their boots still on, they stamped out the sand liṅgas,
made by the Seven Sages on the banks of the Gaṅga,
while the celestial sages licked their fingers,
to wipe away the ochre that marks their brows.[306]

By 1523 Kṛṣṇadevarāya had reached Gulbarga, the historic stronghold of the now defunct Bahmani sultanate. What transpired after the razing of the capital is of particular significance. As Nuniz explains:

> In the city of Calbergara, in the fortress belonging to it, the King took three sons of the King of Daquem. He made the eldest King of the kingdom of Daquem, his father being dead, though the Ydallcão wanted to make King one of his brothers-in-law, who was a bastard son of the King of Daquem, and had married one of the Ydallcão's sisters; for this reason he had kept these three brothers prisoners in that fortress." He

303 AM VI.139,
304 Sewell 1972: 353.
305 Sewell 1972: 357.
306 AM I.41. Compare this image to a humorous *cāṭu* verse quoted in *Further Sources* Vol. II, 135.

> whom he thus made King was received by all the realm as such, and obeyed by all the great lords, and even by the Ydallcão owing to his fear of the King. The other two brothers he took with him, and gave them each one an allowance, to each one every year fifty thousand gold *pardaos*; and he holds them and treats them as princes and great lords, as indeed they are. After the return of the King to Bisnaga, which took place in the same year in which he had left, nothing more passed between him and the Ydallcão worthy of record, relating either to peace or war.[307]

The authoritative actions of the victorious Kṛṣṇadevarāya were surely sowing the seeds of Vijayanagara's collapse at Tālikoṭa less than fifty years later. The reestablishment of Bahmani sovereignty earned the king the title – *yavana-rājya-sthāpanācarya* or *yavana-stāpiñcavāḍu*, the Establisher of Yavana Rule.[308] This final act of legislation defined Kṛṣṇadevarāya as the supreme ruler of the Deccan.

The (Port)uguese

As in the battle for Raichur, in which the use of European musketeers turned the tide of the battle, the Portuguese were an extremely important player in premodern Deccani warfare and commerce.

> Christovão de Figueiredo replied that the whole business of the Portuguese was war.[309]

> Merchants from distant lands,
> who import elephants and warhorses
> should be kept in imperial service at the capital.
> Treat them with prestige
> and provide them with towns and mansions.
> Purchase their goods at a high price
> and ensure that your enemies are deprived of such resources.[310]

A keystone of Deccani warfare in the sixteenth century was the maintenance of a powerful cavalry. It was often the case that the party with the most horses took the day, a trend that would slowly decrease with the greater proliferation of firearms throughout South Asia[311]. For Kṛṣṇadevarāya, his stunning military success against both the Yavanas and the Gajapatis was contingent upon ensuring the steady inflow of foreign warhorses. This emerging global sea-trade was now controlled by the Portuguese, who, since Afonso d'Albuquerque the Great's capture of Goa in 1510, had established themselves in several port settlements along the southwestern coast of India. Fresh from Moorish conquests in the Middle East, these devout Christians of Iberia came with the recent memory of the bloody Moorish Inquisition. They naturally played Moor against native in their hopes of securing an exclusive trading agreement

[307]Sewell 1972: 358.
[308] See Eaton 2005: 90.
[309] Sewell 1972: 343.
[310] AM IV.258.
[311] For a further description of the usage of firearms in the Deccan, see Eaton's 2009 *Kiss My Foot*. Interestingly, Eaton notes that at Raichur, the army with less gunpowder machinery, i.e. Vijayanagara, was victorious.

with one of the major Deccani powers.[312] By the 1520s, Vijayanagara under Kṛṣṇadevarāya, had secured exclusive rights over the import of (Port)uguese warhorses.[313]

In the verse above Kṛṣṇadevarāya makes reference to the respectful treatment that should be shown to these foreign merchants, he recommends inviting them to court (*purin kŏluvu tejambu*) and housing them in fine quarters (*sad-gṛhamulu*).[314] Compare this to Paes' recollection of being feted in Vijayanagara in the company of the hero of Raichur, Chistovao Figueiredo.

> When we came to this country the king was in this new town, and there went to see him Chistovão Figueiredo with all of us Portuguese that came with him, and all very handsomely dressed after our manner, with much finery; the king received him very well, and was very complacent to him. The king was as much pleased with him as if he had been one of his own people, so much attention did he evince towards him; and also towards those amongst us who went with him he showed much kindness. We were so close to the king that he touched us all and could not have enough of looking at us.[315]

> here he [Kṛṣṇadevarāya] commanded us to be lodged in some very good houses; and Figueiredo was visited by many lords and captains, and other persons who came on behalf of the king. And the king sent him many sheep and fowls, and many vessels (calõees) full of butter and honey and many other things to eat...The king said many kind and pleasant things to him, an asked him concerning the kind of state which the king of Portugal kept up; and having been told about it all he seemed much pleased.[316]

The foundation for this maritime traffic was the immense flow of "hard money," along international trade routes, that brought vast sums of wealth, including Spanish silver, to the shores of southwestern India.[317] In the early 1500s Vijayanagara was at its geo-economic peak, and Paes calls it "the best provided city in the world", "as large as Rome." He goes on to describe the bountiful riches of its markets and the diverse crowds of merchants from around the world.[318] During the reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya the royal coffers were overflowing with wealth, for the vast empire was now drawing in a surplus of revenue and tribute. In a word, Kṛṣṇadevarāya had all the necessary capital to fund his large-scale trading ventures.

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312 Cf. Letters from Afonso to Bijapur and Vijayanagara published by the Hakluyt Society.

313 In his Introduction Sewell cites the Portuguese alliance with Vijayanagara (and its subsequent defeat by a united Moorish force at Talikota in 1565) as a causal factor in the decline of Portugal's presence in South Asia.

314 This sentiment is repeated in the king's injunction in verse IV.245: "Promote trade by providing for ports and advancing the import of horses, wild elephants, jewels, perfume, and more." He goes on to add that "When foreign citizens are plagued with drought, disease or disaster take in the displaced and provide for them according to their class". Here foreign citizens (*anya bhū-prajalu*) seems to refer to troubled citizens from neighboring empires but VVS interprets them as the Portuguese sailors who disembark (*digu*) due to storms or disease.

315 Sewell 1972: 251.

316 Sewell 1972: 252-3.

317 For this "constant infusion and flow of mobile wealth" was essential to the propagation of a sultanate state system. Eaton 20005: 24.

318 Also "In this city you will find men belonging to every nation and people, because of the great trade which it has..." Sewell 1972: 256-8.

Finances

The treasury of Vijayanagara had been growing for some time before Kṛṣṇadevarāya. The 'Kaveri milch cow' as Burton Stein puts it had long been the primary source of Vijayanagara's material capital and Paes corroborates the long-standing tradition of maintaining the state treasury:

> the previous kings [*i.e.* Narasimha] of this place for many years past have held it a custom to maintain a treasury, which treasury, after the death of each, is kept locked and sealed...and thus the kingdom has great supplies to meet its needs. This king [Kṛṣṇadevarāya] has made his treasury different from those of the previous kings, and he puts in it every year ten million *pardaos*, without taking from them one *pardao* more than for the expense of his house.[319]

Compare this to a verse from the king that describes the imperial budget, making it clear that the upkeep of the state savings account was never to be neglected.

> Even if it is big, a quarter of the budget
> should go to the king's gifts and pleasures,
> half to maintain a powerful military
> and a fourth to the treasury vault. [320]

Kṛṣṇadevarāya is also clear that fifty percent of state revenues should be allocated to the military, leaving 25% for savings and another 25% for gifts and pleasures (*cāgambu bhogambu*) or "house expenses."[321] Some of these expenditures were gifts made to soldiers or other courtiers in appreciation of their exemplary services. Often the king would remove a precious stone or article from his own body, thereby making his gifting (*dāna*) into a form of royal renunciation (*tyāga*).[322] The regular payment of officer salaries was another important fiscal duty that finds mention in the king's poem as well as both of the contemporaneous Portuguese accounts.

> When
> buying elephants, horses or fodder
> paying the salaries of good soldiers
> honoring brahmans
> or indulging in personal pleasures
> expense is not waste, it is gain.[323]

Paes notes the dispensation of graded salaries – the king "distributed pay to all...men of the guard who have a thousand *pardaos* pay, and other eight hundred, others six hundred and more, and a

[319] Sewell 1972: 282.
[320] AM IV.238. Only a portion of this verse is quoted here, the other part deals with the reports of spies.
[321] Extrapolating from verse IV.238 and Paes' account, the annual Vijayanagara budget can be estimated at around fifty million *pardaos*, or eighteen billion *reis*.
[322] cf. AM IV.280 where this homology is made explicit. The word used in IV.238 is *cāgam*, a Telugu variant on the Sanskrit *tyāga* or renunciation.
[323] AM IV.262.

little more or less; there is a difference, and also a difference in the persons."[324] Nuniz adds to the list with a number of day-pay workers *viz.* groomers, trainers, artisans, blacksmiths, carpenters, masons and others. He makes specific reference to stable hands, caretakers and the "chief master of horses" Madanarque.[325] Compare this to the king's own insistence on skilled animal caretakers:

Protect your stables at all times
  and keep them well stocked with the best fodder.
Entrust the care of finely bred horses and elephants
  to skilled and loyal servants only,
  never to your lords.[326]

Nuniz goes on to describe the king's purchase and maintenance of Persian horses, always stressing the central importance of the Portuguese maritime intermediaries. The warhorse was of critical importance to the pre-modern Deccani kings, and for Kṛṣṇadevarāya, horses became equivalent to the Portuguese. His relationship with them was like the rapport between trusted business partners, and his lavish treatment of them guaranteed his exclusive rights to these essentials vehicles of war. To end, here is one beautiful verse about foreign horses from a rather poetic description of Madhura. And although this poem is not contained within one of the "more historical" sections, it clearly evidences that the Tamil city was a metaphor for the king's own capital of Vijayanagara.[327]

Soldiers need two stirrups to mount their tall stallions
but as the horses gallop and begin to crouch
their riders become scared as their feet graze the ground.
 'Which of these two is worse? And what becomes of us?'
 think the proud warriors as they feign exhaustion,
humbled twice over by these mighty swift steeds
from Persia, Balkh, Herat and Khotan.[328]

3.10 Conclusion

One major goal of this section has been to merge two divergent streams of academic scholarship that have contributed most significantly to the study of Kṛṣṇadevarāya of Vijayanagara, namely the literary and the historical. Here I understand "academic scholarship" to mean the primarily 'western' modes of scholasticism that have come to dominate what we now call international academics. In the South Asian context, both of these fields are rooted in the monumental scholarship of British colonial scholars. These early philologists and historians greatly contributed to the academic study of India but rarely (if ever) did they work in tandem

[324] Sewell 1972: 283.
[325] I have not been able to identify this person but it is clear he is a specialized worker, with no elite court affiliation per say.
[326] AM IV.226.
[327] Kṛṣṇadevarāya never describes Vijayanagara; nowhere in the text is the imperial city mentioned, and yet one gets a very distinct feeling that images of his capital were always in his mind as he penned his descriptive cityscapes. Sistla seems rather justified when he claims that "the description of Dakshina Madhura in particular, in my opinion, appears like an allegory of Vijayanagara and its surroundings." Sistla 2010: 57.
[328] AM II.29 and Note II.29, also cf. AM II.26-8.

with each other. This academic isolation carried on into the twentieth century as "area studies" scholars focusing on language and literature seldom engaged with traditional historians interested in chronological dating, archaeological evidence and archival materials. Literary scholars working on translations of a specific text would become so narrowly focused on the minutiae of manuscripts and/or the compilation of so-called critical editions, that they often failed to contextualize the text in terms of stylistic or literary developments, let alone the concomitant socio-political forces and trends that surely influenced the production and reception of such texts. At the same time, historians, who based (and continue to do so today) much of their research on these very translations, often used these resources with no critical eye as to their translation or original provenance. In addition there was the vexing problem that much South Asian literature was simply deemed invalid as source material in the construction of an objective history of India. In short, the fields of literary and historical South Asian studies have suffered from an academic separation that is to a large extent still in need of bridging. I hope this preliminary analysis has demonstrated how productive such an integration can be.

One important distinction can be drawn in regard to the genealogy of these two scholastic traditions. Whereas literary scholasticism is/was an ancient and indigenous tradition practiced by Indians, 'history' as we know it in Western terms, is certainly a much younger discipline.[329] The methodological and disciplinary divergences between literary and historical studies also bear out in terms of the "texture of the content" produced in these respective fields. In other words, we must understand how scholars, literary versus historical, have remembered Kṛṣṇadevarāya's place in history. The textualists (as well the current mass of Telugu speaking populace) view him as a great patron of the arts, a glorious emblem of Telugu literary and cultural pride. The historians on the other hand see him as a powerful monarch, holding sway over peninsular India, now on the threshold of a new world order of global economics and geo-politics. The king's own self-image quoted earlier reflects that he clearly saw himself as both of a great king and a great patron-poet.

Through critical textual juxtapositioning I hope to have highlighted the intriguing correlations between these two seemingly disparate sources. I believe they paint a more mutli-dimensional picture of the king – a vision of a man that clearly reflects the forces of change that permeated not only his person, but his empire and its people as well. In addition I hope to have convincingly argued that *Āmuktamālyada* was (and in fact could only have been) written by a complex, passionate warrior statesman like Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Not only the political poems or the historically relevant colophonic verses, but the great poem as a whole, seem to resonant with the grand poetic vision and sincere devotionalism that coursed through this larger than life poet-king. With a firm background in the literary, religious and historical processes of his time, we may proceed to a more detailed analysis of the poems, with a focus on their unique poetic and aesthetic qualities.

[329] Cf. Trautmann on the influence of Pāṇini on the formation and development of modern linguistics.

CHAPTER 4
The Poetics of Telugu

4.1 The Alaṅkāra Tradition

As has been discussed earlier, Telugu is a judicious blend of Sanskrit and Tamil modalities, not only in regard to linguistics, cultural themes and political ideologies, but also in terms of poetic modes and forms of literary expression. Although the classical Telugu literary tradition has consistently and self-consciously aligned itself with the great Sanskrit *alaṅkāra* tradition, a deeper of analysis of these aesthetic trends will reveal a significant poetic influence of Southern origin on both Sanskrit and Tamil literatures. This indeed may be another reason for why the southern languages of South Asia were more equipped, and therefore the first, to vernacularize. As much as the Sanskritic cosmopolis is argued to be "fixed" "pan-Indic" "eternal" and thereby somehow cosmic, this notion itself is rooted in a self-conceived and self-perpetuated notion of the Sanskrit language. As is evident from the literary theories of the Sanskrit tradition itself, there are a plethora of regional manifestations, a rich variety of locally specific cultural formations, ambiguities and anomalies in morphology, vocabulary and pronunciation.[330]

The masterful eleventh century compendium of King Bhoja, the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, for example, enumerates a number of varieties of Sanskrit, including Vedic forms (*śrauta* including *mantra* and *brāhmaṇa*), philosophic (*ārṣa* encompassing *smṛti* and *purāṇa*) and even worldly or *laukika* styles which were bifurcated into the systematic language of *śāstra* and the expressive language of *kāvya*.[331] He goes on to further delineate a wide variety of Prakrit and Apabhramṣa languages, a scheme that seems to even include a language like Persian. This goes to show that on the eve of the vernacular moment, there was a clear consciousness among Sanskrit scholars about linguistic diversity and differentiation. Later in the twelfth century, Ācārya Hemacandra's lexicon of locally absorbed nominals, the *Deśīnāmamālā*, included words that were neither Sanskrit nor Sanskrit-derived, a clear testament to the historical reality that regional languages did penetrate the falsely perceived impervious seal of Sanskrit vocabulary. This bidirectional exchange, at the very least on the level of lexical borrowing, is an important marker in understanding the influence that this interaction had on both communities. After all, a highly erudite polymath composing in Sanskrit was prompted, by the prevailing linguistic realities that he witnessed before him, to compile a dictionary of non-Sanskritic vocabulary.

Many other Sanskrit theoreticians echo this notion of pan-Indic linguistic diversity and it is crucial to bear in mind that as much as Sanskrit strived to remain a closed linguistic force, it was in close contact with many other languages, and in turn was constantly constituting itself in relation to these alterior entities. Within this environment of multilingualism however, Sanskrit did in fact retain a fairly impressive degree of linguistic isolation. One of the critical means by which this was achieved was the strict adherence to a formalized grammar. Pāṇini's brilliant *Aṣṭādhyāyī* fixed the Sanskrit language at a very early stage in an incredibly precise and inflexible manner. As we will see later, the Tamil *Tolkāppiyam*, a grammatical compendium significantly more inclusive in scope, and in some senses much less precise and explicitly

[330] Pollock casually adds, "naturally some local coloring would occasionally intrude." Pollock 2006: 256.
[331] See Pollock 2006: 109-10 for more on Bhoja's poetics.

authoritative, would occupy an analogous, though markedly different role in Tamil literary history.[332]

In Sanskrit, practice follows theory, and Pāṇini was explicit that his work was prescriptive and not descriptive in nature. Moreover, as a more general rule, it appears that Sanskrit literature was composed in adherence to, or as an exemplar of, preexisting and well-enunciated aesthetic norms. In the newly emerging vernacular literatures however, the paradigm appears reversed, as grammatical, philological and poetic treatises postdated the production and circulation of stylized literary models. The Tamil tradition for example, is explicit about the idea that theory follows practice. In the *Akkatiyam*, a grammar supposedly composed by the mythic sage Agastya and believed to be a precursor to the *Tolkāppiyam*, it is said: "Literature yields grammar, just as oil is obtained from sesame seed; there is no grammar without literature, just as there is no oil without sesame seed."[333] Later, in the overview of Tamil poetics, it will become even clearer how diametrically different the Sanskrit and Tamil poetic systems are in relation to notions such as the mythic and historic. For the moment however, it will be important to briefly explore the extent to which a Southern ethos had permeated the theorization and production of Sanskrit literature in the later part of the first millennium CE.

Daṇḍin, arguably the most influential Sanskrit literary theorist ever, was also a South Indian who composed his famous *Kāvyādarśa* at the Pallava court in Kāñcipuram, the very heart of Tamil country.[334] It is quite reasonable then that this masterpiece of poetics was translated into Tamil as the *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāra* and garnered a high place of respect among poetic treatises in Tamil. Moreover, in the translation process the text was "rendered with more fidelity to the original than other versions."[335] Was this done out of deference, availability of manuscripts, ease of intelligibility, or possibly even feelings of resonance that the text engendered among the native Tamil scholars? Although Pollock claims that "The realities of the language practices in the southern sector of the Sanskrit cosmopolis that underwrote the Ways of literature in the first place would have been unintelligible to northern theorists," he goes on to assert that "Daṇḍin clearly spoke with special force to Deccani intellectuals." He also adds that Daṇḍin's southern bias is rather evident as he "famously defined southern literature as endowed with all the expression forms."[336] Although it is almost impossible that southern literary formations would have been unintelligible to northerners, it is clear that influential theorists like Daṇḍin were in a sense pan-Indic in their theoretical scope. However much they might have been absorbed by the cultural and linguistic modes of high Sanskrit, they were fundamentally South Indians, with a distinguishably unique literary ethos in their hearts and minds. By this standard it seems, as Pollock rightly suggests, that this early theorization by Southerners shaped developments in the North (particularly Kashmir), innovations which would later give rise to the *dhvani* theory of Ānandavardhana and the *rasa* theory of Abhinavagupta, both of which have cogently been argued to have been first present in ancient Tamil.[337] It is curious (though readily

[332] The *Kātantra* was another, more simplified Sanskrit grammar that was popular in the South, especially among Buddhists and is likely to have been written in South India by a Dravidian speaker. See also the possible connections between the Aindra and Kātantra schools and the Tolkāppiyam in Arthur Burnell's *On the Aindra school of Sanscrit Grammarians* (1875).
[333] Zvelebil 1992: 131-2.
[334] Even much later theoreticians like Appaya Dīkṣita were of southern origin.
[335] See Pollock 2006: 399 and Monius 2001.
[336] Pollock 2006: 216, 344 and 346.
[337] In regard to the Sangam poems, Hart unequivocally states: "Every image in the poem has an often complex symbolic function, and the interplay of symbols causes the poems to create a resonant effect in the reader's mind, with each symbol reinforcing the others to create an almost inexhaustible variety…[and] this technique fits the

understandable) that the Sanskrit cosmopolis was so well articulated and effectively delineated by southern intellectuals whose spoken language and cultural milieu were certainly not Sanskritic. This seems to be the case expressly because they had a very clear understanding of what Sanskrit *was not*. Thus providing yet another example of how alterity creates distinctiveness and identity.

Here is one further example from Ratnaśrījñāna, a Sinhalese Buddhist scholar who composed a commentary on Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* at the Rāṣṭrakūṭa court in the mid tenth century. His southern roots in terms of origin and employment are readily evident when he writes of the southern way:

> "The *vaidarbha* Way is a particular mode of composing literature that is defined by the use of aesthetic factors (*alaṅkāra*) relating to words themselves – that is, the ten expression-forms – and that is natural (*svābhāvika*) to southerners…Even though it may be observed among the easterners, the southern Way is not native to them as it is to the southerners. Just because sandalwood may be observed elsewhere, [than in the Malaya] does not make it indigenous (*tajja*) to that other place. On the contrary, it remains indigenous to Malaya even if observed elsewhere. Thus, one may chance to observe the *vaidarbha* Way among easterners, but in reality it still belongs to Vidarbha, being congenital [natural] (*sahaja*) to southerners."[338]

This so-called *vaidarbha* Way is geographically related to the land of Vidarbha, an area of the northern Deccan that was always a geo-linguistic frontier zone. The passage above makes clear that there is something palpably distinct about the southern modality, something that allowed scholars to easily distinguish a Sanskrit work composed by a southern writer as opposed to a northern one. This therefore established a modality that was at once pan-Indic yet capable of localized differentiation.[339]

Already by the early second millennium CE, newly emerging vernaculars like Telugu were able to create a very clear distinction between *mārga* and *deśi*, not only in relation vernacular versus Sanskrit, but reflexively in regard to internal registers within the new languages. Interestingly this bifurcation was applied to Sanskrit itself much before it became a useful analytical tool among the vernaculars. As Pollock remarks, "The source of this organizing taxonomy of Sanskrit poetry [*mārga* versus *deśi*] seems to lie…in the inclinations of southern poets – Tamil-born poets like Daṇḍin himself, who helped establish the Ways as authentic options – to write Sanskrit in conformity with the sensibilities of the southern languages…"[340] In this sense it is fairly clear that these so-called southern sensibilities were essential to the construction of theoretical and aesthetic constructs that indeed became pan-Indic poetic modalities. In other words, southern poetics were crucial to the development of Sanskrit

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dhvani theory of Sanskrit poetry, propounded best by Ānandavardhana in his *Dhvanyāloka*, far better than most of the Sanskrit poems that the *alaṅkārikas* sought to analyze by it." Hart 1975: 169. See also Hart 1975: 161-196 for a detailed analysis of suggestion in the Tamil and Sanskrit contexts. See Pollock 2006: 217-8 for an opposing view. He adds that Ways are important "only to the degree that they subserve the main goal of suggesting aestheticized emotions, the telos of literature. They are ultimately, as Abhinavagupta comments here, only a matter of *rasa*."

338 Pollock 2006: 214.

339 The fourteenth century Śiṅgabhūpāla in his *Rasārṇavasudhākara* mentions a mixed *rīti* called the *āndhra* style of Sanskrit composition. He was employed the Telugu-speaking Recarla dynasty and was surely propagating a new stylistic localization. See Pollock 2006: 218-9 for more information.

340 Pollock 2006: 351.

alaṅkāra theories, not only as an oppositional foil, but as a distinctive mode which was itself already part of the larger trans-regional discourse.

In effect the southern vernaculars were drawing upon originally indigenous sources which had been filtered around and through the northern Sanskrit cosmopolis. This kind of cyclical feedback loop is not new to this epoch or region, in fact it is a simple fact of cultural change and development. As Hart has so convincingly argued, it is a process that we can trace back to the very earliest development of Indic literature. In the end, this kind of theorizing does not lead to a polarized analysis that establishes a dominant/subdominant or superposed/disposed binary, but rather a dynamic model which presents cultural transformation, not as the exchange of hierarchicalized entities, but rather as a process of bidirectional influence between mutually constituting cultural entities. In essence there is a dialogic process at work. Pollock himself sees the truth behind this cyclical process of appropriation, modification and diffusion when he unequivocally states that early Kannada writers "appropriated the discourse of the cosmopolitan Ways for the vernacular sphere in what turns out to have been the reappropriation of a very old, and southern, contribution to the discourse of cultural cosmopolitanism itself."[341] Furthermore, there was no shortage of Sanskrit textual production in the South as is evidenced in the writings of the theoreticians discussed above, several Jain and Buddhist scholars, not to mention the later *bhakti*-inspired productions of poets like Vedānta Deśika and a host of others.[342] And last but not least, the important *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, written by South Indians in South India and largely based on the Tamil *Divya Prabandham*, is a textual representation of the complex circulation of cultural, religious and literary elements throughout the entire Indian subcontinent.

4.2 Myth vs. History

As much as there was extensive cultural interaction between north and south, there clearly remained a perceptible distinctiveness to each tradition that reached back to the very earliest literary strata of Sanskrit and Tamil cultures. As far back as the Vedas for example, there is an almost exclusive concern with the mythology of transcendental, extra-terrestrial gods; a concept of the divine that was beyond the pale of human life – not here in this world but up there in *svarga* or heaven. These ideas are not unique to Sanskrit and reflect a deeper Indo-European ethos, well evidenced for example in the larger than life mythologies of the Greek pantheon. These notions of a transcendent divine force are in strong contrast to the ancient Tamil ideas of *aṇaṅku* – a sacred force which was imminent not only on earth, but within specific human beings. This was a divine power inherent in nature that could only be channeled or controlled by the proper regulation of human society. In this sense the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions are starkly different in their perceptions of the sacred; a wide conceptional rift that would be mediated and brought together under the influence of *bhakti* modes and vernacular transformations.[343]

This divergence in world views also plays out on the axis of mythological versus historical. The Sanskrit idea of a "language of the gods" was well suited to the promotion of vast non-geographically rooted and non-chronologically specific tropes of historical knowledge. The

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[341] Pollock 2006: 378.

[342] Even the Āḻvār Kulaśekhara wrote his *Mukundamālā* in Sanskrit not Tamil.

[343] In regard to the mythic in *bhakti* contexts, Hardy writes: "In general, we may say that myth for the Āḻvār is the bridge between Kṛṣṇa in the heart and Kṛṣṇa as the object of his longing to see." He goes on to add that "The concrete 'temple' is the symbolic link with the mythical 'place,' and the real environment is fused thereby with the realm of myth." Hardy 1983: 405, 417.

Tamils with their more localized themes emphasized specific historical personages in *puṟam* poems and more general domestic interactions in the *akam* poems.[344] Prevalent in early Tamil literature was a very deep concern for the realities of everyday life, be they in war or love. These ideas of historicity also affected the political discourse so that a Sanskrit king could claim that he was the "king of kings who ruled from the Himālayas to Kumari", while the Tamil king would say "I am Pāri of Paṟampu!" The syncretic bridging of the two great classical modalities is no more evident than in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *Āmuktamālyada* where the king speaks with both registers. In his brazen colophonic verses in particular, Kṛṣṇadevarāya can speak self-reflexively about his place in history, while simultaneously invoking universalized Sanskritic tropes about beauty and power. Take just one example from AM VI.139 (translated above) where he states that "near Nirmanuru, I, Kṛṣṇadevarāya, lord of the earth, stood at the front of my army…toppling shining jeweled mansions that rise to kiss the sky." He has fully situated the poem in a historic and geographic reality and yet quickly amplified that foundation with hyperbolic motifs reminiscent of classical Sanskrit.

4.3 The Tiṇai Tradition

The historically rooted ethos of Tamil poetry is linked to what scholars like Hardy and others have called anthropocentricity, an idea often misconstrued as human supremacy. In fact the notion seems to have been invoked in reaction to the idea that Tamil society was devoid of religion and gods, and therefore secular. What is most clear, and evident throughout all periods of Tamil cultural history, is that sacred forces were extremely powerful, and that they inhered in the bodies and practices of specific humans in society. From a poetic perspective the expression of this socially constructed worldview was expressed through the emotionally charged metaphor of nature, and not necessarily via myth as was so common to the Sanskrit tradition. As Hardy comments: the "early Southern religion differs markedly from the normative ideology and is characterized by a pronounced 'earthliness' which includes aspects of ecstatic religion. Southern poetic culture is important in our context because here a firm link is established between poetic symbols and emotive responses."[345] A deeper exploration of Tamil poetics will be useful in comparing it to Sanskrit modes, and contextualizing the Telugu tradition's pervasive (though often downplayed) employment of Dravidian forms, poetic techniques and most importantly modes of diction.

The aesthetic theories and poetic norms that developed in Tamil country clearly reflect a deep connection to the immediacy and variety of nature and its power. All the *puṟam* and *akam* poems are classified according to *tiṇais* or "landscapes" as they have been deemed by A. K. Ramanujan. This is a rather apt rendering considering that the poems and their characters inhabit very particular locales. The *tiṇai* is more than a simple setting, it is "a unity of behaviour-patterns and the appropriate landscapes" in which specific human situations (*tuṟais*) are played out and enhanced by physical markers (*karu*) like specific flora and fauna.[346] These psychosomatic settings resonate with a variety of poetic conventions that artistically link the natural world outside to the emotional world inside, a modality that was also a mark of the great

[344]The characters of *akam* poems are examplars and ideals with no historic specificity, whereas the *puṟam* heroes are explicitly mentioned by name. See Tol. III.1000 in Hardy 1983: 147.
[345] Hardy 1983: 127.
[346] Zvelebil 1974: 36.

kāvya writers like Kālidāsa.[347] Here are Zvelebil's eloquent remarks about Tamil's remarkably unique poetic system:

> "it is significant that the ancient Tamils have developed a highly sophisticated and, as far as we can say, quite independent and original theory of literature, a poetics and a prosody which have their important place in the great literary and theoretical achievements of mankind in this field. What is so immensely attractive about this classical Tamil attempt is that what they have achieved is a structuralist vision of the poetic universe: for the system of conventions constitutes a kind of metalanguage of the poetry; each poem presupposes the existence of the entire system; each situation and theme have a true meaning only in relation and reference to all other themes and situations; each symbol, each image derives from a thematic whole. It is an inventory, not of an enumerative type, but well-organized in a system of interreferences."[348]

As in the Sanskrit tradition, one singular grammar played an extremely important role in defining the phonological and morphological rules of Tamil.[349] The famous *Tolkāppiyam* of Tolkāppiyar however, was much more than a treatise on grammar alone. It contained significant portions on poetic theory, aesthetics, metrics and literary criticism, and seems to have been added to over the centuries. The more literary topics found in the Poruḷatikāram section for example are indubitably of a later origin. And so unlike the Sanskrit tradition, Tamil theoreticians seem to have been readily willing to update theories based on practice.

Beyond the elaborate theorization of *tiṇais*, the old Tamil poets employed a rather complex, yet subtle usage of poetic suggestion. This technique was surely used in other Indic languages but it never quite achieved the central pervasiveness or masterful usage that it achieved in the old Tamil literary ethos. In fact, suggestion was the hallmark of the Sangam poems. As has been discussed by Hart, the technique of poetic suggestion was slowly developed as cultural elements from the Dravido-Deccan flowed to the North. As a whole this mode of poetic expression is much more common in Prakrit than classical Sanskrit. Take for example this verse from the *Gāthā-sapta-śati* which depicts a typical scene of travelers receiving water from girls working at roadside rest stops.

> As the traveller, eyes raised,
> Cupped hands filled with water, spreads
> His fingers and lets it run through,
> She pouring it reduces the trickle.[350]

An almost identical scene is encapsulated in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's own poem where the subtlety of suggestion seems to have been subsumed in a more detailed expression of human emotionalism – a technique that was the hallmark of sixteenth century Telugu literary production at

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[347]Hardy adds that "the concrete *tiṇai* is artistically employed to lay bare (and communicate) the *akam*, the inner world of emotions." Hardy 1983: 367. Also in Note 209 he relates this principle to Sanskrit *rasa* theory and the use of *bhāvas* to elicit *rasa*, just as the Tamil 'landscapes' do. Sanskrit *kāvyas*, like the old Sangam poems, were in effect externalizations and revelations of the internal world through metaphoric ideation with the natural world, a literary modality that increasingly lost poetic force in the Sanskrit productions of the second millennium CE.

[348] Zvelebil 1974: 34.

[349]Other important grammatical treatises include the early eleventh century *Vīracoḻiyam* and the famous early thirteenth century *Naṉṉūl* by Pavaṇanti.

[350] Verse 161 in Mehrotra's *The Absent Traveller* 2008.

Vijayanagara; or as Narayana Rao and Shulman put it, "the internalization of this creative potential in the living human subject."[351] Here is the poem from *Āmuktamālyada* that resonates so strikingly with the Prakrit *gāthā* above:

And as tired travelers stagger to the stalls
humbly calling, 'Dear mother, sister, please give us some water!'
the women pour water into their low cupped hands.
The thirsty young men are slowly quenched
but quickly forget their earlier words
as they start to look up, and then back down
peeking at thin arms, round breasts and glowing faces
whetting their minds as they pretend to keep drinking.

But when the girls start to notice the foolish game
they exchange knowing glances and stop their pouring,
melting the men's hearts with their teasing laughter.
And as the men reveal the secrets of their heart ,
they lovingly offer fresh tāmbūlam
as if they were paying a service tax
to the wealthy God of Love,
for love may be poor in other lands
but never amongst these sultry ladies.[352]

The traditional, or rather more typical, usage of subtle suggestion was certainly not lost among the Telugu poets. In fact in AM I.13 the god Āndhra Viṣṇu praises the king's skill in *bhāva dhvani* or "expressive suggestion."[353] Often, as was the case in the poems above, poetic suggestion plays out through erotic or sexual innuendos. Here is just one example from Kṛṣṇadevaraya, who by all critical accounts was a very "respectful" poet, especially compared with other poets like Pěddana who were known to be rather salacious.[354] This verse is from a series of poems (AM II.19-23) about *puṣpalāvikalu*, the enchanting flower-sellers of Madhura.

"Hey, how much for you garland?"
    "My garland? Who has the right to give it value?"
"Honey bees wait near your braids, so where are the lilies?"
    "Though the lilies are elsewhere, can't the fragrance linger?"
"Lotus-eyes, where is the jasmine?
For wherever there are lilies, the jasmine is rare!
O Beauty, give me your ever-fragrant flower,
and look forward to the everlasting!"

With these words his desires grew,

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[351] NRS 40.
[352] AM II.59. For a detailed poetic analysis of this verse see NRS 40-42.
[353] The phrase in and of itself seems to be an example of suggestion as the Sanskrit can also be read as the "sound of amorous gestures." See also the interpretation of TKR 17-8.
[354] Pěddana's "erotic lyricism…constitutes a kind of limit, unsurpassed by any other Telugu poet." See Shulman 2001. Kṛṣṇadevarāya is much more subtle in his use of erotic sentiments, cf. AM V.3.

the sound of her voice exciting him from within,
as a young men flirted with a flower seller
in that city of Madhura.[355]

The most critical, and in many ways the most subtle, mode through which poetic suggestion was used by Kṛṣṇadevarāya and the other Vijayanagara poets was through allegory. Scholars tend to underestimate the amount of inter-textuality that was common at this time, especially at the vibrant, prolific and well-patronized court of the poet-king. This idea has been explored in Chapter 3 but here it is important to bear in mind that Kṛṣṇadevarāya's most brilliant and conscious use of suggestion seems to be his ability to create allegorical literature, and not just poetry based on mythic elements, but work rooted in himself, his family, and the historical realities of his time.

4.4 Love and War

The two broad genres of Tamil poetry, the *akam* and the *puṟam* are often categorized as love and war or inside and outside. Both these stylized genres are strikingly evident in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's work and a few textual examples will make the point clear. One mark of the *akam* mode is the focus on domestic life, particular the myriad kinds of relationships between lovers. No matter what the particulars of the setting are, all the poems are expressed through the voice of a person (often a female) in the situation. It may be a mother, a friend, or the waiting lover herself. This creates a powerfully expressive dialogic form of expression that is uncommon to Sanskrit poetry but appears with great affect in Telugu and other vernaculars. Much of Chapter V in *Āmuktamālyada* falls into this modality as it focuses on Goda, her impassioned longing for her lost love, and importantly, the teasing/comforting of her playful friends. There is no place in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's great work that resonates with the Tamil *akam* poems more than this central section on the inner life of Goda's devoted heart. As Hart explains "In Tamil the young heroine often plays with her friends in the sand, making sand houses, playing ball, and playing with dolls. In Ak. 60, for example, she "makes toy houses with her garlanded friends on the shore heaped high with sand by the north wind," while, in Aiṅ. 377, her mother laments that she has eloped "leaving her ball, her doll, and her molucca beans for me."[356] Here is one beautiful verse from *Āmuktamālyada* that describes Goda's special friends and their childhood pastimes, including "playing with dolls."

The Moon Faced One was once the Earth Goddess
and due to her friendship with the snake maidens,
Marāḷi, Ekāvaḷi, Hariṇi, Manojña and Sragviṇi
were all reborn as her companions, daughters
in the houses of her devout Vaiṣṇava neighbors.

The girls passed the time, acting out the stories
of Viṣṇu's forms, playing with dolls
reenacting the marriage of Lakṣmi and Nārāyaṇa

[355] AM II.19. I have only translated AM II.20 in the attached translation. The heavy use of double entendres and subtle puns in the remaining verses make literary translations particularly challenging. See Sistla 2010: 182-5 for an attempt at double translations.
[356] Hart 1975: 249.

and singing wedding songs that described the Lord's virtues.

And listening to these songs, over and over again
Goda fell into a trance – memories
of her past life came back to her
and she longed to be reunited with her beloved.[357]

The highly colloquial back and forth repartee between a heroine and her friends is certainly an old pan-Indic motif; one that finds a rather humorous, and therefore arguably more expressive appearance in *Āmuktamālyada*. Goda has just castigated Lord Viṣṇu for his improprieties with women (albeit in the form a *nindā-stuti*) and now her friends have come to console here. The following four verses clearly depict the passionately conversational expressivity that seems to come almost directly from the old *akam* poems.

‘No matter who they are, all husbands are alike.
Forget about him. Don't worry about these little things.
When they're far away you're hurt, and when they're with you
you're submissive, praising them as if they were Indra or Candra!
Don't you understand? We end up being your messenger girls.’

But as soon as they spoke, she had to control her anger.
She smiled a bit, and then bit her lip.
She continued to play with her friends, tossing the ball
here and there, her sidelong glances making sure
that no one was around. And then she said-

‘Leave him out of this! It's not your job to make up lies!
There's less harm in this kind of talk if you pretend to be singing,
so go ahead, continue with your pleasant songs.
Remember, a man who asks for rice pudding needn’t be poor.’

And her friends responded–
‘You're right! We'll keep quiet.
But soon enough, maybe even right now,
perhaps later, or maybe tomorrow
you'll tell us about his beauty
you'll tell us about his cruelty.
O friend, who are you trying to fool?
It's clear you're filled with thoughts of him.’[358]

And if the playful banter of teenage girls is too jocular, the aesthetics of old Tamil balance this interior life with the gruesome and often bloody descriptions of the cruel, brave world of war and politics. This affection for “blood and flowers” is yet another aspect of the Tamil poetic sensibility – “the presence, often in union, of an aesthetic combining savagery and

[357] AM V.37. For a puṟam reference see Puṟ. 53; for Sanskrit references see *Kumārasaṁbhava* I.29, V.11.
[358] AM V.56-9.

delicacy."[359] Kṛṣṇadevarāya often employs this modality as in this invocatory verse that vividly describes the bloody powers of Lord Viṣṇu's discus Sudarśana. Even the divine attributes of god are readily worshipped with such powerfully graphic imagery.

When Rāhu swallowed the elixir of the gods
Sudarśana quickly chopped off his head
and forced immortal juice to come pouring out his mouth.
The other demons looked on as thick blood spurted from his neck
like a wide pot, under tall flames
bubbling and boiling with seething rage.
To this divine discus Sudarśana, I offer my salutations.[360]

In regard to battle which was common to both Sangam and Vijayanagara times, Hart comments that the "battlefield itself was metamorphosed into another world…a place where everything was charged with sacred power to the highest degree." In this process of sanctifying war, the sacrifice became the means by which the gruesome was made benign.[361] In AM I.42 (quoted in full above) Kṛṣṇadevarāya vividly describes the crushing defeat of Adil Khan's armies and the purifying war sacrifice that followed. After comparing his victory to the verdant growth of newly cleared fields, his court pandits go on to add: "You crushed the skulls of Khurasani warriors like melons, and built a gruesome effigy with the Adil Khan's decapitated head!"

4.5 Telugu Poetics

Almost every aspect of the Telugu literary aesthetic, be it in the field of grammar, poetics, prosody or diction, can be traced to a synthesis of poetic elements from the ancient Sanskrit and Tamil traditions. Even when Telugu literary attitudes tended towards an elevation of Indo-Aryan cultural models, there was an ever-present return to an almost inescapable grounding in a Dravidian ethos. And like these two great classicisms, an emerging vernacular like Telugu desired a proper grammar that could codify, legitimate and effectively reify the new literary system. The only person who could do this (in apparent keeping with the theory before practice model of Sanskrit) was the *ādi-kavi* Nannaya, also reverently known as the *vāg-anuśāsanuḍu*, or the Legislator of Language.[362] He not only inaugurated Telugu literary production with his *Āndhra Mahābharatamu*, he is also said to have composed the *Āndhraśabdacintāmaṇi*, the first Telugu grammar, written in pure Sanskrit no less.[363] This text is lost to us except in references made more than half a millennium later by the seventeenth century grammarian Appakavi in his influential *Appakavīyamu*.[364] It becomes apparent then that

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[359] Hart and Heifetz 1988: 8.
[360] AM I.9.
[361] See Hart 1975: 32-3. cf. Puṟ. 26 for a dramatic portrayal of a war sacrifice, where for example, a cooking pot of blood is stirred with a severed enemy arm, with the bracelets still on no less!
[362] Also said of Nannaya is: "Praise to him, teacher of poets, who first enunciated the grammar of the language of Āndhra."
[363] The early Telugu grammars were written in Sanskrit and largely evidence the derivation of Telugu forms and structures from Sanskrit. The linguistic/grammatical apparatus itself in regard to terminology, vi*bhakti* (declension), etymology, etc. were all taken wholesale from the Sanskrit tradition and grafted onto the new literary idiom.
[364] For further information see See Narayana Rao 1995: 36, Narayana Rao's chapter *Multiple Literary Cultures in Telugu* in Pollock 2003 and VNS 230-5.

the later tradition was very consciously crystallizing a normative narrative to frame the origin and development of this now mature and independent literary tradition.

Although Nannaya may have given birth to the vernacular revolution of literary Telugu, it was Tikkana who gave it a mature and stable foundation by penning a large portion (15 *parvans* no less) of Nannaya's unfinished *Mahābhārata*. His poetic style was also unique, it was far less Sanskritic, and much more rooted in the Dravidian syntax and diction of colloquial speech. His multi-talented disciple Ketana is believed to have written the *Āndhrabhāṣābhūṣaṇamu*, quite arguably the earliest Telugu grammar, and also a work wholly written in Telugu! In essence Tikkana and his students seem to have localized the vernacular, which is to say that Telugu poets were continuing to mediate between the modalities of *mārga*/*deśi*, local/global, literary/oral, etc. in a way that was increasingly pleasing and aesthetically effective. This may in fact be one reason why Tikkana styled himself as an *ubhaya-kavi-mitra*, a Friend of Both Poets.

The grand Telugu *prabandhas* of the Vijayanagara poets are ostensibly more equateable, stylistically and in several other ways, with Sanskrit *kāvyas*. Both genres strictly adhered to requisite compositional qualities like the proverbial eighteen compulsory descriptions of kings, mountains, cities, love, war, etc.[365] Regardless of these outward similarities, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marked a period of great innovation in Telugu literary aesthetics, an evolution that was arguably due to the growth of a regionalized cultural self-consciousness.[366] In contrast, the earlier Telugu genre known as *kāvyam* seems to have been limited to the early works of poets like Śrīnātha who embraced the Sanskrit tradition wholesale. Kṛṣṇadevarāya refers to his own work, in AM I.13 and other places, generally as a *kṛti* or composition, while at one place in AM I.50, the short prose passage before the beginning of Chapter I, he clearly gives us the title of the magnum opus as *Āmuktamālyada* and describes it as a *mahā-prabandham***,** a distinction that apparently parallels the *kāvya*/*mahā-kāvya* difference, and one that is only capable of being made when a tradition is prolific and robust enough to make such qualified graded differentiations.

Shulman remarks that, "One could also describe the mature poetics that crystallized in Telugu in the seventeenth century as, in part, a meeting between the somewhat abstract and heavily theoretical world of classical Sanskrit *alaṅkāra-śāstra* and the ancient Deccani world of 'magical', divinatory, and generative poetic speech, keyed to an emerging presence."[367] This syncretic analysis take us back to the old classical meets folk construct, a notion that is at once well substantiated and readily obvious when reading the literature, but at the same time dismissive of a centuries-old confluence of these two not-so independent cultural strains. In the case of Telugu we are also faced with the challenge of discerning how much of this harmonization is rooted directly in actual language usage, that is to say Indo-Aryan versus Dravidian lexical choices, or broader notions of theme or style.

The *Āmuktamālyada* of Kṛṣṇadevarāya

In the case of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *Āmuktamālyada*, it is clear that the level of poetic syncretism is well beyond just language style and lexical choice. When much of classical Telugu poetry was still following the typical Sanskrit convention of drawing thematic inspiration from

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365 See Narayana Rao 1995 for more information on these shared qualities, and on the terminological distinction between *prabandha* and *kāvya* in the Telugu context.
366 Although the tangible apparatus of this new literature was arguably a transformed form of Sanskrit court poetry, "the aesthetic impact [was] usually described in a vernacular idiom." Pollock 2006: 367-8.
367 Shulman 2001: 8.

the *purāṇas* and other mythological sources from Sanskrit, the poet-king boldly shifts his orientation to the Tamil south. He takes up the story of a historical person, a female saint no less from the southern *bhakti* tradition centered around the Āḻvārs. In some ways, though not nearly as discursively, *Āmuktamālyada* functions in a way similar to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* whereby southern, and particularly Tamil Vaiṣṇava religious traditions were carried north via new literature models.

More than anything else Kṛṣṇadevarāya's brilliant masterpiece was a melding of the two dominant literary and culture paradigms of *kāvya* and *bhakti*. The only precedent to this kind of imaginative fusion was the famous medieval Tamil poet Kampaṉ whose reworking of the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki was a literary achievement of the highest order.[368] In his *Irāmāvatāram*, Kampaṉ "very often seems to exchange his role as the ingenious *kāvya*-poet, telling a compelling story with constant interruption for lengthy description, for that of the theatrical magician primarily concerned with bringing divinity to life."[369] Kṛṣṇadevarāya seems to have picked up this very same quality of elevating the mundane to celestial spaces, or rather exposing the divine that is apparent in everyday life. This particular modality will be explored below in greater detail but here it is important to see how poets like Kampaṉ and Kṛṣṇadevarāya were exploiting known literary forms, stretching and expanding them in new ways to enunciate new poetic modes and elucidate growing religious trends. This view is articulated by Cutler when he argues that "the saints' poems convey an experience that is at once aesthetic and religious. Savoring an aesthetic flavor or *rasa* is the poetic goal for audience of Sanskrit drama, and, similarly, experiencing god *through poetry* is the goal for the Tamil devotee."[370] In a work like *Āmuktamālyada*, Kṛṣṇadevarāya is quite capable of achieving both goals harmoniously.

4.6 Literary Techniques

One of the main poetic techniques of Sanskrit (and Tamil, though in markedly different ways) is the *upamā* or simile, a poetic figure that carried over into the classical literatures of Telugu and Kannada, albeit at a much more dazzling, and sometimes dizzying, intensity. In Sanskrit the metaphor encompasses one, maybe two elements of comparison (the *upamāna* and the *upameya*) but in Telugu this rises to four, five or even more depending on the poet's imagination. And although this exercise (like the development of the bombastic *citra-kāvyas* of later Sanskrit) did at times become rather artificial and contrived, a master poet like Kṛṣṇadevarāya takes us to the edge without stepping over. When reading one of his poems, first there is the moment of uncertainty and fogginess of the image, then a bit of clarity as the pieces fall into place, and then the "Aha!" moment, a progression that is in fact similar to how one reads a good Sanskrit poem, like a puzzle with a satisfying solution. The subtle poetics of Sangam literature are not found here, but this I believe is a functionality of genre more than anything else. The Sangam poems were self-contained yet expandable worlds of suggestive ideation, whereas the *kāvya* poet, Sanskrit or vernacular, was always serving to construct, to some degree or another, a larger narrative framework. Each poem is then more like a building block, unique as it may be, within a larger poetic edifice.

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[368] See Introduction in Hart and Heifetz 1988 for more information. Interstingly, Kampaṉ who lived sometime during the early centuries of the second millennium, still refers to Sanskrit as the language of the gods, cf. *Kamparāmāyaṇam* I.10.

[369] Shulman 2001: 9.

[370] See Cutler 1987: 13ff for the development of a "poetics of Tamil *bhakti*."

Here is just one example where the typical comparison of a woman's thighs (*tŏḍalu*) to a plantain trunk (*kadaḷi*) is expanded to include a comparison of Goda's feet to the red flowers, and her toenails to the pistils. The simple one-to-one homology is heightened to the point that the metaphoric mapping is played out on multiple levels. In addition, the entire scene is contextualized as an overt theft of Goda's beauty by the plantain tree, a conceit that relates to the overturning or inversion of the standard Sanskrit convention.

> The plantain tree is a thief, and there lies all the evidence–
> a smooth layered trunk hides the beauty of her thighs
> and tender flowers steal the redness of her feet,
> while crowbar-like pistils pry at her ruby-like toenails.[371]

If *upamā* is central to Sanskrit poetry then suggestion is at the heart of Tamil poetry. Hart has argued that the use and development of suggestion is intimately connected to the semantic and syntactical structure of a language. He notes that "while the structure of Sanskrit favors long descriptions in which many elements modify one noun without ambiguity, Tamil favors descriptions in which the different modifiers are not applied to one noun."[372] As usual Telugu has the ability to draw from both modes and negotiates this divide through a judicious and sometimes extreme usage of complex *samāsas* or compounds. The longest purported Sanskrit compound ever composed is said to be found in a Telugu text, supposedly written by one Tirumalāmba, wife of Acyuta Deva Rāya, the younger brother of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. It has even been suggested that the branch-like structure of Sanskrit compounds was in fact an imitation of semantic units used in Dravidian.[373] A schematic based on Hart's analysis shows how Telugu integrates these two modes into a complex pattern of descriptors and modifiers.

> Sanskrit: A, which is B, C, D, E, and F
> Tamil: A, which is B, which is C, which is D, which is E, which is F
> Telugu: A, which is B, C and D, which is E and F.

One way in which these rich syntactic structures are utilized is in the creation of vividly detailed tableaus. In one short poem of just four lines, the Telugu poet packs an entire scene filled with multiple characters, live action and natural beauty. Here is one example that describes a beautifully whimsical scene at dawn in the town of Śrī Villiputtūr:

> *tala pakṣacchaṭa grucci bātuvulu kedārampu kulyāntara-*
> *sthali nidrimpaga cūci yārĕkul uṣassnāta prayāta dvijā-*
> *vali piṇḍīkṛta śāṭikal-savi tat-āvāsambu cerpaṅga re*
> *vula ḍiggan vĕsa pāṟuvāni kani navvun śāli gopyoghamul*

> ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ — ; — — ∪ — — ∪ —

> head feather-mass stick ducks paddy canal-inner-
> place when go to sleep see, watchmen dawn-bathed had gone brahman

[371] AM V.30, see also Note V.30.
[372] Hart 1975: 182-6.
[373] See also Hart's "Syntax and Perspective in Tamil and Sanskrit Classical Poetry" in *South-Indian Horizons: Felicitation Volume for Francois Gros.* pp. 219-227.

group washed clothes thinking, their houses to take back washing-
place get down, quickly fleeing-ones seeing laughing fields girl group

In the waterways of rich paddy fields
ducks tuck their heads into their thick white plumage and fall asleep.
The watchmen think, 'These must be the clothes, squeezed dry
and left behind by the brahmans who bathed here in the morning!'
And as they dive into the water to fetch and return the clothes,
the ducks scatter, while the girls, huddled and watching from the fields
start to laugh.[374]

This poem written in the Mattebha *vṛtta* meter of Sanskrit origin clearly evidences features of Dravidian syntax. Most striking is the animation of Sanskrit compounds with a characteristically Dravidian usage of verbal forms. The building up of non-finite verbs is essential to the poet's ability to describe what is in essence a moving picture. First the ducks tuck (*grucci*) their heads down and then they are seen (*cūci*). Next the watchmen make an assumption about the situation (*savi*) and dive into the water (*ḍiggan*). The poetic action however is not complete for the whole scene is seen (*kani*) by girls who start to laugh (*navvun*). By piling up these verbs which are all Dravidian in origin, long Sanskrit compounds like *uṣassnāta prayāta dvijā-vali piṇḍīkṛta śāṭikal*, come to life. In every line of this poem we also see the use of complex enjambment wherein words can move over *pāda* divisions, a technique that was inadmissible in Sanskrit but lauded in Telugu as a marker of prosodic skill. This convention heightens the sense that a Telugu poem, much like the old Sangam poems, is one continuous flow of connected ideas.

To a reader familiar with these poems, it is as if Telugu is Tamil in a Sanskrit body – all the complex subtleties of Dravidian semantics and verbal forms are neatly encapsulated within the elegantly compact prosodic and aesthetic principles of Sanskrit – effectively creating some of the most pleasing and aesthetically satisfying poetry of South Asia.

Expressivity

The power of the new millennium vernaculars, both political and literary, was largely due to the expressive force that the emerging literary mediums now embodied. They were literally "languages of the land" or *deśa-bhāṣas* that spoke to a new regionally self-aware populace of mixed social strata that was experiencing powerful shifts in the political and religious domains of daily life. In contrast, it was exactly the Sanskrit cosmopolis' broad, non-geographically (or spatially) specific universality that eroded Sanskrit's source of power. In fact, it was this very non-specificity of time and place conveyed by the tradition that led most Indological scholars of the past (and still many of the present generation) to dismiss Indic literature as devoid of empirical historical data. Indeed, over the centuries, after enough local and regional kings proclaimed their great dominion over the four corners, from the Himālayas to Cape Kumāri, bound by the two great seas, these stock phrases which were applied to anyone became meaningless to everyone. The so-called death of the cosmopolis, which was itself so well defined and disseminated by literary modalities, was now written on the wall so to speak in the muted expressivity of second millennium Sanskrit literature. In essence, the poetic power of the language had dried itself out; the tradition remained standing on an antiquated albeit magnificent

[374] AM I.65.

body of literature that was sadly incapable of being updated, revitalized, or adapted to a new time and place.

As a general rule, Sanskrit was universally available "across region, ethnie, sect, and time…[it] escaped every spatial and social boundary;...escaped time itself, and with it the perceived mutability of the so-called natural languages."[375] This very mutability of language is, however, very real and wholly natural. In fact "natural" languages like the Indo-Aryan Prakrits or the new vernaculars, were in a constant state of flux and evolution, just like the peoples who spoke them. In truth, natural linguistic change is what makes a language *historical*, and ultimately expressive. Therefore, the cosmic invariability that made Sanskrit so hegemonically dominant as a cosmopolitan language of power was exactly the same factor that led to its downfall as a language of poetic expression. Erich Auerbach's pointed characterization of Medieval Latin is remarkably applicable to Sanskrit of a similar epoch: "a purely artificial language written according to ancient models and often degenerating into a pedantic puzzle…incapable of expressing the life of the times."[376] Sanskrit of the second millennium CE seems to have become rather sterile, or as it name rightly describes, artificial. It was ideal for encoding systematic thought in *śāstric* texts but poor for emotive literature. Simply put, it was dissociated from everyday life, and could no longer *speak* to people. As D. H. Ingalls has noted, Sanskrit "was not a language of the family. It furnished no subconscious symbols for the impressions which we receive in childhood nor for the emotions which form our character in early adolescence. Sanskrit was therefore divorced from an area of life whence the poetry of what I would call the natural language derives much of its strength."[377] From a linguistic perspective, this shift was the primary causal factor in the so-called vernacular revolution. The quickly emerging literatures of Telugu and Kannada could reach out to a progressively regionalizing populace and speak with the direct immediacy of place, time and cultural ethos.

Anthropocentricity

The primary modality by which the southern vernacular languages of the early second millennium CE were able to create expressive literatures was by "grounding", so to speak, the celestial qualities of Sanskrit poetry in the anthropocentric earthiness of the Tamil aesthetic. In other words, languages like Telugu and Kannada which were Dravidian in origin, molded Sanskrit sensibilities onto to their natural Dravidian roots. A modality similar to that which occurred centuries earlier during the emergence of *bhakti* literatures seems to have been at work here as well. An extended comparison drawing on Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu will serve to highlight how this process was critical to the aesthetic development of this new literature. Take the example of Viṣṇu's famed white conchshell known as Pāñcajanyam. Its appearance in Sanskrit is limited, but here is one famous reference at the very beginning of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in the context of pre-battle war cries that strike fear into the hearts of enemies.

> Lord Kṛṣṇa blew the Pāñcajanya, and Arjuna his Devadatta,
> while wolf-bellied Bhima of ferocious deeds blew his mighty conch called Pauṇḍra.
>
> The sounds grew to a great tumult, reverberating through heaven and earth,

[375] Pollock 2006: 100.
[376] Auerbach 1965: 121-3.
[377] Ingalls 1965: 6. See also the comments of Ramanujan 1981: 132-3 and Heifetz 1990.

and shattering the hearts Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.[378]

Here is an example from Āṇṭāḷ's *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* in which the same divine conch is recontextualized and reimagined with a wholly different aura of sentimentality. The conch is no longer a harbinger of war, a mark of martial strength or even political power, rather it is a divinely, pure ornament of the lord, worthy of praise and worship. Āṇṭāḷ's sexual undertones are also revealed when she expresses her jealousy of Pāñcajanyam's ability to be so close to the lord's hands and lips. As Venkatesan translates in the colophonic verse at the end of cycle seven, these verses extol "the intimacy of Padmanābha and his Pāñcajanya."[379] Here is the first poem of the decad, one of the most beloved and oft quoted poems of Āṇṭāḷ:

Are they fragrant as camphor? Are they fragrant as the lotus?
Or do those coral red lips taste sweet?
I ache to know the taste, the fragrance of the lips
    of Mādhava, who broke the tusk of the elephant.
Tell me, O white conch from the deep sea.[380]

Needless to say there is a very clear difference in the tone, diction and aesthetic principle underlying the two passages cited above. Both however are drawing on similar thematic material, albeit in different ways, and for different ends. A negotiation of these two polarities was (and in many ways still is) the essence of a language like Telugu. Here is a fine poem from Kṛṣṇadevarāya's invocation in *Āmuktamālyada* which synthesizes the grandiloquent power of Sanskrit with the expressive sensuality of Tamil.

When Hari breathes in, to blow his conch
    the air passes over the blackened mire of sin
    sucking out the life force from demon after demon.
And when he breathes out, the bees that swarm at his lotus lap
    are drawn towards his mouth by his fragrant breath.
O Pāñcajanyam, white and radiant like a full moon night
    everything around you is purified.[381]

As Hardy has commented, "we see here a new poetic spirit emerging which can apostrophize mythical objects like the conch, and build up a symbolism on clearly intellectual premises - resonances of the Sanskritic *alaṅkāras.*"[382] In other words, Hardy is getting at the fusion of Sanskrit and Tamil modes. Telugu then, like a double-weave clothe, has the distinct ability to simultaneously appear as two, and yet, harmoniously as one.

One critical development in this process was the humanization of mythic characters and themes. In Telugu, especially the matured literarture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a very conscious promotion of the idea that literature had generative powers[383], an idea rooted in the fundamental belief that divinity was inherent in humanity. In many ways this was a

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378 *Bhagavad Gītā* I.15 and I.19.
379 Venkatesan 2010: 167, *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* 7.10.
380 Venkatesan 2010: 166, *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* 7.1.
381 AM I.5. See also Note I.5.
382 Hardy 1983: 421.
383 See Introduction in NRS: 1-8.

return to the old Tamil concept of *aṇaṅku* and the location of sacred forces within members of society. As Shulman explains: "In the Vedic case, human beings can only transcend themselves upwardly, toward the absent but partly remembered divine reality, with which they seek to reconnect; in the Telugu anthropogony, divinity generates humanity through exotic processes of indirection, which literalize, in the flesh, the metaphoric delusion of *sambhoga* – love experienced in self-fulfillment."[384] Here the very real theme of human sexuality becomes the foundation for both divine and mortal creation. In this sense the often mythic principles of cosmogony are equated to the real and immediate physical realities of human love. One beautiful example of this idea is found in Chapter V of *Āmuktamālyada*. Just before Viṣṇucitta's discovery of the baby Goda under a *tulasi* tree, Kṛṣṇadevarāya includes a lovely verse about the beauty of human lovemaking. In this case Shulman's "divinity generates humanity" is inverted as the poet seems to believe that there could be no spontaneous creation, that humanity in fact generates the divine, and in essence, that life only comes from life.

One day in a mango grove, in the middle of a thicket
filled with tender leaves and fresh new flowers
a couple made a bed of love. And all was well.

She was above him, breathing hard
but tired easily and laid back down,
the sweat making mango leaves stick to her back
as if Love was announcing his victory.[385]

In this poem, anonymous humans of no particular station, share a moment of genuine sexual pleasure and ostensibly produce the earthly manifestation of the goddess Goda, who is, in and of herself both transcendent and terrestrial.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Pĕddana's *Manu Caritramu* could very well have been an allegory for the birth and life of Kṛṣṇadevarāya, a work that the poet-king explicitly commissioned for his court. In that story the celestial nymph Varūthini entices the mortal man Pravara which in turn leads to the birth of the first man. This kind of relationship seems to be more in line with the Sanskrit tradition that often matched divine women with mortal men. In Kālidasa's *Vikramorvaśīyam*, the mortal Purūravas falls in love the celestial Urvasī, and the same in *Śākuntalā* when the king Duṣyanta marries the semi-divine Śakuntalā. In this respect it is important to consider that even among the highly cultivated poets of the Vijayanagara court, Kṛṣṇadevarāya stands out as a singular voice. Unlike the magic ointments and mystical *siddhas* in *Manu Caritramu*, the poet-king offers us a sense of the magical by locating it in the simple, yet profound marvels of human life. His is a vision of humanity very much grounded in the existential rather than the paranormal.

Many of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's unique innovations exhibit a distinct southern orientation and an inversion of normative Sanskritic themes. In this regard, his *Āmuktamālyada* is truly unique, and embraces a worldview of expansive yet richly detailed proportions. It is to some of these remarkable features of his poetry that we now turn our attention.

[384] Shulman 2001: 334-5.
[385] AM V.3. See Note V.3 for further analysis of this fascinatingly complex verse.

4.7 Divinity in the Everyday

One of the most outstanding qualities of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's literary imagination is his genuine interest in, and detailed descriptions of, everyday life. From the meticulously described flora and fauna, to the penetrating insights into human behavior, Kṛṣṇadevarāya's vivid realism seems to come from a heartily lived experience of life and nature. Unlike other brahmanic court poets who never stepped foot outside the palace, the poet-king was often out on military campaigns that inevitably took him into the towns and countrysides of his vast domain. His keen skills of observation served him well as he took in these scenes of daily life in Andhra, and then later recorded them in poetic form. As Narayana Rao and Shulman put it: "Both an extraordinary realism and a sweeping imagination come into play as the poet moves from the kitchen to the battlefield, from the courtesan quarters to the temple or the royal palace."[386] This all-inclusive poetic vision is firmly rooted in the Tamil poetic sensibility that cultivated "a characteristic approach to poetry emphasizing suggestion and concrete, everyday imagery."[387] Here is one fine image from *Āmuktamālyada* where the poet explicitly mentions Drāviḍa women (*draviḍa aṅganal*) and their simple yet beautiful activities in preparation of the morning *pūja*.

> In the gardens of Śrī Villiputtūr
> Drāviḍa women bathe in oval ponds filled with red water lilies,
> and after smearing themselves with holy turmeric
> they tenderly collect lotuses for their morning pūja.
> Walking along garden paths with flowers in their hands
> and water jugs swaying at their hips, their silver anklets glitter and jingle
> as they happily return home singing songs of devotion.[388]

And although much of *Āmuktamālyada* is imbued with an explicitly devotional aura as in the verse above, Kṛṣṇadevarāya is ever ready to ground his poetics in the mundanely secular. This return to the ordinary however, is far from banal; in fact it showcases the poet's incredible talent for taking the ordinary and creating something extraordinary.[389] Even when he takes up a simple subject like food, he offers several mouth-watering descriptions of seasonal menus (AM I.80-82), brahman feasts (AM II.73) and travel meals (AM II.97). These scrumptious gastronomic poems are some of the most beloved verses in the poem and are widely praised by pandits and poets alike. Here is just one example about clever epicureans (*bhogulu*) taken from the section on the summer season.

> On a summer afternoon, expert epicureans
> season sun-ripened mangoes in sizzling hot oil
> and saute fresh cuts of fish taken from dried-out ponds.
> And at sunset when they burp from the spice,
> they stroll to shady groves where they've buried coconuts in the sand
> and ease their tummies with refreshing juice.[390]

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[386] NRS 167.
[387] Hart 1976: 337.
[388] AM I.56 and Note I.56.
[389] Hart adds: "the better descriptions use cosmic imagery in a way that makes the reader aware of the cosmic significance of a small act or object." Hart 1975: 196.
[390] AM II.68.

Unlike the Sangam poems, however, Kṛṣṇadevarāya was quickly able to switch modes and return to the elevated, celestial-like register of Sanskrit poetry. This is in fact the most profoundly satisfying feature of Telugu literature, a literary quality in which the poet-king excelled, quite possibly more than any other Telugu poet. Below are two poems which utilize the image of harvesting rice in strikingly different tones. The first describes a quaint and bucolic image of South Indian village life, reminiscent of the old Tamil *akam* poems, while the second describes a celestial scene populated by demons (*rakṣas*), ghosts (*piśāca*) and Lord Viṣṇu riding his mount Garuḍa. What is most important is that both examples, as much as they tend towards the Tamil and Sanskrit traditions respectively, are in fact a fusion of both, and in essence, wholly Telugu.

> Drāviḍa girls sit and guard freshly harvested rice,
> laid out to dry in sun-filled courtyards.
> And meanwhile girls from the village arrive
> carrying wicker baskets with lilies for sale,
> and as the girls begin to barter,
> a spotted temple fawn starts to gobble up the rice
> until the girls rush back to scare it away.[391]

> With wonder, a host of demons and ghosts came to see Lord Viṣṇu
> but as soon as they felt the rushing wind from the Snake-Eater's wings
> they all fled in fear, flying away like pithless grains
> beaten on a threshing floor, scattered by a winnowing fan.[392]

Localization

Another poetic aspect that is readily visible throughout Kṛṣṇadevarāya's grand epic is the detailing of local geographies. This process was explored in detail in Chapter 3 from a historical angle, while here it is elucidated as an effective poetic device. In fact, part of *Āmuktamālyada*'s significant poetic contribution is based on the sagacious balance of local specificity and imperial grandeur. In many ways this quality is what makes the text speak historically, a trait reminiscent of the old *puṟam* poems. Whenever Kṛṣṇadevarāya mentions Pāṇḍya, Coḻa or Drāviḍa women he is very consciously situating the reader in a geo-cultural space. Often these references come at the very beginning of sections which mark a change of scene, and therefore a shift in spatial orientation. Take for example this verse from Chapter VI where Viṣṇucitta and Goda have left Śrī Villiputtūr in the Pāṇḍya land and travelled to Śrīraṅgam on the banks of the Kāveri River in the heart of Coḻa country.

> The breeze spread over the Daughter of Kavera,
> carrying the melody of swan songs, accompanied
> by the tambūra-like drone of carpenter bees.
> The refreshing river air, perfumed by red water lilies
> that decorate the braids of Coḻa women, eased the weary Viṣṇucitta.[393]

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[391] AM I.75.
[392] AM IV.13.
[393] AM VI.92.

It is a poem like this that conveys an immediate sense of the physical reality of these places. As one reads through *Āmuktamālyada*, there is very distinct feeling of being taken on a vivid journey through South India to sacred towns and temples. To this day one can trace the footsteps of the poet-king and revisit the great city of Madhura, and the holy places of Śrī Villiputtūr and Śrīraṅgam, not as defunct archaeological remains but vibrant, animated locales imbued with the continuity of a living tradition.

Nindā Stuti

Kṛṣṇadevarāya's ability to situate his poetry in the local and the everyday was in many ways rooted in modes borrowed from the *bhakti* tradition. For the Āḻvār poets in particular there was a powerful impetus to see divinity in every action of life, from play to worship, love to war, and life to death. This notion was very much part of the philosophical purport that animated the rapid and ubiquitous spread of devotional Vaiṣṇavism that so influenced the poet-king. As discussed in Chapter 2 there also developed a personalized relationship with god that was at once reverent and casual to the point of flippancy. The mode known as *nindā-stuti* showed that divinity was not an inaccessible force in heaven, but rather, as the poems make clear, an imminent force in the everyday life of all people.[394] Here is one poem from Nammāḻvār where the poet playfully scolds the Lord for his lies and treachery.

> Don't tell us those lies,
> heaven and earth
> know your tricks.
> Just one thing,
> my lord of the ancient wheel
> that turns at your slightest wish:
> while all those girls
> – their words pure honey –
> stand there
> wilting for love of you,
> don't playact here and sweet-talk
> our lisping mynahs,
> out chattering parrots![395]

In *Āmuktamālyada* Kṛṣṇadevarāya crafts an entire section of Chapter V in this mode as he describes the caustic outpourings of the lovelorn Goda. Just like any parted lover, mortal or otherwise, her anger towards the Lord hides her deep love and genuine desire for union. Here are two rather acrid poems from Goda's heartbroken lips:

> That Viṣṇu! Instead of becoming a god, a sage, or a king
> and stirring the hearts of women,
> it would've been better if he stayed, just as he was, ages ago
> a fish, a turtle, a pig, or a lion!

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394 See also Hardy 1983: 394-8 for information on the fascinating genre known as *maṭal*. He adds "the *maṭal* is the way in which these blameworthy or humiliating deeds can be publicized."

395 TVM 6.2.5 in Ramanujan 1993: 139.

In ages past, that man came to earth
because of the women who loved him.
Their tear-filled eyes gave rise to his aquatic births,
their hair standing on end became the stiff hairs of a pig,
and their heated passion turned into a ferocious lion.
All his descents were but cunning means
to hide his real intentions.[396]

These poems clearly reflect a very fundamental Śrīvaiṣṇava belief that god is here and now, he is both real and transcendent, but ultimately knowable in an intimate way through true devotion or *bhakti*. Furthermore, this immediate divine presence on earth made every tangible reality a trope to experience divinity. It was this exact philosophy that animated Kṛṣṇadevarāya's vast scope and piercing depth in describing the myriad beauties of life and nature. In other words, he saw the splendor of life as an expression of god and poured this vision into his great literary masterpiece.

Bhrāntimat

One extremely common literary trope employed by Telugu poets, especially those of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's epoch, was the poetic ornament that Sanskrit theorists deemed *bhrāntimat-alaṅkāra*, the technique of delusion, or rather misapprehension. This mode provided the poet with a highly effective tool in expressing the fundamental divinity in the most commonplace objects and activities. A master poet like Kṛṣṇadevarāya is thereby skillfully able to infuse his seemingly simple characters with his genuine wonder for life. He's also able to display his charming sense of humor like in the verse quoted above (AM I.65) or the one below in which common swans become birds of paradise, all due to the simple bathing of Drāviḍa women.

After Drāviḍa housewives prepare their bath
by rubbing sticks of turmeric in the waters of their bathing ponds,
white-winged swans fall asleep near the jewel-encrusted steps
and stain their feathers a deep rich yellow,
so bright, that when they waddle through the town
people see them as the golden swans of heaven
descended from the celestial river.[397]

As in the poem above, the images of Telugu poetry, complex as they often are, are depicted directly with the intimation of simile markers like *ana* "as if," or the explicit *pola* meaning "like." These markers do not diminish the metaphoric intent, rather they consciously transport the images into imaginative ideations that play out in the minds of the characters, and ultimately the reader. In this respect, Kṛṣṇadevarāya is not merely describing scenes of enchantment, he is providing a framework for the reader to experience them internally.

Here is one poem in which men from the street fantasize about a courtesan emerging at dawn from her bed chamber. Every element of reality is carefully mapped out onto an imagined

[396] AM V.41 and V.44.
[397] AM I.64.

conception (*āvaham-au*) that becomes just as real, if not more so, than the physical truth itself. In this image, hair, flowers, breasts, nails and bees are transformed into *vīṇa*, frets, gourds, plectrum and sound. This intense buildup of several parallel images that ultimately relate back to one object or scene of description is characteristic of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's style, and an epitome of the Telugu literary potential. As discussed earlier there are aspects of Telugu syntax and meter that fundamentally make a poem like this possible.

> At dawn, courtesans stand under rooftop eaves
> and pull their black hair between their breasts to untie their braids,
> and as they flick away last night's withered flowers
> with their long trim nails, honey bees emerge and buzz away.
>
> Lustful men see this scene and fantasize
> that the courtesans are playing a double-gourd vīṇa,
> a sweet tune rising as they quickly move their hands
> across the ivory frets.[398]

The technique illustrated above was not unique to Kṛṣṇadevarāya. His friend and poet-laureate Pĕddana for example provides a rather *puṟam*-esque poem in praise of his great king. In this illustration of *bhrānti*, the birds (see above) mistake diamonds for nest materials; this subordinate image, however, is imbedded within a much larger metaphor that moves to clandestine lovers and ultimately the king who is linked back to the preliminary image of a killer elephant.

> Killer elephants scrape deserted walls
> with their tusks, and diamonds fall,
> flickering like the fireflies
> birds use to light their nests.
> That's where you'll find them
> today – out of place, made into lamps
> nestled in trees all through the parks
> where lovers met, in cities wrecked
> by our king.[399]

Like Kṛṣṇadevarāya's own productions, the multi-layered effect of this poem resonates with the multi-faceted sophistication of the ancient Tamil poems. Moreover there is a clear purpose of regnal glorification, along with a subtle yet essential evocation of the romantic. In many ways these Telugu poems seamlessly bring together the two worlds of *akam* and *puṟam* poems, genres which in even in ancient Tamil exhibited a great deal of stylistic crossover. The Telugu poets of course also had recourse to the dominant Sanskrit tradition from which they drew most heavily. As the tradition developed, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in particular in Vijayanagara and its subordinate courts, it increasingly defined itself in a self-reflexive manner that was marked with a cognizant appreciation of its southern roots and its northern influences. It was Kṛṣṇadevarāya's unique position as emperor, patron, and poet that allowed him to legislate on these matters in a particularly subjective manner.

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[398] AM I.62.
[399] Shulman 2001: 329.

4.8 Authorial Subjectivity

The notion of authorial subjectivity has already been discussed in regard to the bold first person expressivity found in the *bhakti* tradition. In Telugu *kāvya* poetic subjectivity is apparent not only in terms of the reader's singular experience and appreciation of each poem, but also in regard to the precision of language employed by the poet. Take for example the poet-king's self-aggrandizing colophonic verses quoted earlier in Chapter 3.[400] Nowhere are the king's self-conscious notions of majestic grandeur more present than in these powerfully personal statements. In AM I.89 his bold, unabashedly self-congratulatory voice finds its literary realization in a highly Sanskritized diction, packed with long compounds, harsh gutturals and aspirated phonemes. The verse begins as follows: *idi karṇāṭa-dharā-dhṛti-sthira-bhuja…* Kṛṣṇadevarāya uses a high register to describe the newly conquered Karṇāṭa land, but begins the poem with the simple Telugu pronoun *idi*, which, regardless of its tiny size, powerfully grounds the poem in the present moment, and, a wholly South Indian geography. Although *idi* is the sole Telugu word in the poem, its initial position immediately sets the tone for the entire long Sanskrit compound to follow. Meaning "this" or in this sense also "here", the simple but effective inclusion of a Telugu pronoun completely localizes the geo-political mapping of the king's conquest. The timbre of the poem suggests that he is marking physical territory, not only by proclaiming his right but by staking his sovereignty in hand and deed. The first person voice makes his statement all the more powerful and emphatic.

Later in the colophon that ends Chapter II (AM II.101), the poet explicitly deploys the pronoun *asmat* in regard to "my *Āmuktamālyada*." This usage is repeated in several subsequent poems as well. By using the honorific plural form of the Sanskrit first person pronoun, the king is unequivocally taking ownership of his poem and the sentiments conveyed within it, be they romantic, religious or political. In addition, he goes on to describe himself as *mahi-bhṛt*, "bearer of the earth", along with several other glowing terms which Narayana Rao and Shulman have called a "self-confident, brazen excess [that] runs through each of his verses and the book as a whole."[401] Although this assessment maybe true of the king's colophons, it seems rather unfair to lay this characterization on his entire poetic output.

In truth, most, if not every, king of South Asia was perpetually described in equally grandiose and flowery language. Nannaya surely described his poet Rājarājanarendra in similar terms and set the poetic standard that all subsequent Telugu poets would use as model. It is the unique fact that Kṛṣṇadevarāya is doing this self-reflexively that makes his work such a landmark. This nascent sense of modern subjectivity is another example of how the poet-king was straddling the divide between old and new, representing both an acme and a transitionary moment in the literary and socio-cultural subconscious of an entire subcontinent.

4.9 Prosody and Diglossia

Like many other aspects of Telugu literature, Telugu metrics evidence a harmonious and fruitful amalgamation of Sanskrit and Dravidian prosodic forms and principles. This metrical synthesis in many ways reflects the much longer trajectory by which the distinct prosodic

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[400] Interestingly, while all other Telugu poets used a *vacanam* (prose passage) to conclude their chapters, Kṛṣṇadevarāya is the only poet to use *padya* (verse) to end his cantos. This is yet another example of his non-conformist uniqueness among Telugu poets.

[401] NRS 43.

modalities of these two traditions (*i.e.* syllabic vs. moraic) were interacting. Although a detailed analysis of this fascinating process is not possible here, it is critical to understand how metrics can be used as highly productive markers of cultural interaction. The old Indo-Aryan system of *chandas* was primarily based on an *akṣara* system whereby meters were defined according to a set number of syllables, and arranged according to fixed patterns of long (*guru*) and short (*laghu*) syllables. The ancient Tamil sytem on the other hand was founded on the moraic building blocks of *ner,* one long syllable and *nirai*, two short syllables. Both of these units equated to what may be called a *mātrā* in the Sanskrit system, and therefore these moraic components were used to create metrical forms. Whereas the Sanskrit system provided a rich variety of fixed metrical forms, the Tamil system presented simple units capable of being shaped in multiple ways. The Telugu system drew on both equally, clearly evidencing an interactive exchange that was prevalent in the Deccan for centuries.

The famous Prakrit *Sattasaī* of King Hāla for example was written wholly in the moraic *āryā* meter. This meter was the most prevalent of the Prakrit meters, and certainly had its origins in the *mātrā* meters that were widespread in the ancient Deccan.[402] Hart has convincingly demonstrated how the *āryā* meter is not only similar, but also related to, the old moraic meters of Tamil which used prosodic principles foreign to the old syllabic-count methodology of Sanskrit poetry, and more broadly Indo-Aryan prosody in general. He adds that there can "be no question whatsoever that this meter is derived from the same non-Sanskritic source as the Tamil meters."[403] In the Telugu context, the so-called the native or *acca* Telugu meters, particularly the *kanda* meter, seem to have been derived from this very same non-Indo-Aryan source.

In *Āmuktamālyada* there is an interesting reference to meters when the king describes a group of foreign brahmans sitting under the moonlight after dinner and reciting various verses. Explicit mention is made of the *āryā* meter, as well as a reference to *gīti,* which I have translated as "song" in other places. Although most commentators and translators agree with this interpretation, *gīti* could also be a reference to a variety of moraic metrical forms that entered into Sanskrit including *gīti*, *udgīti*, *upagīti* or *āryāgīti*, or quite possible the indigenous Telugu meter known as *teṭagīti*.

> And using his travelling bag as a pillow
> he laid down on the front terrace with the other brahmans.
> And as they all got settled for bed,
> one read an *ārya* verse, another responded with a *gīti*
> and he passed the time reciting *subhāṣitas*.[404]

The critical point here is that the moraic meters were song-like, lilting, and "flowing as a river" like in Tamil.[405] The fundamental difference between the Sanskrit and Tamil metrical systems was the issue of syllabic number versus syllabic length. In Sanskrit all four lines (*pādas*) within a standard *vṛtta* meter must all conform in syllabic number, position and weight, whereas in Tamil poetry, lines within the same poem may be of variant number and position so long as their moraic weight per line is equal. In other words, the moraic system is very much akin to fitting words into a rhythmic beat, much like a singer singing a song. When verses are

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[402] The earliest Indo-Aryan attestation of the *āryā* meter is in Pāli. See Reddy 2005 for imformation on the influence of the early Buddhists on the absorption and spread of these *mātrā* meters in Indo-Aryan languages.
[403] Hart 1975: 201-206.
[404] AM II.74. See also Note II.74.
[405] See Heifetz 1985.

recited they often belie the rather complex metrical rules which define a particular rhythm, as in the example of the *kavirāja-virājita* meter cited below. Unlike the *vṛtta* meters which have straightforward, fixed schematics to be followed, *mātrā* meters offer a variety of possibilities within metrical feet, compounded one after another to create dizzyingly complex, but nonetheless rhythmically uniform verses.

From quite early on *mātrā* based metrical forms like the *āryā* meter were absorbed into the fold of Sanskrit prosody. It was later during the *bhakti* period, when Sanskrit literature and mythology were heavily incorporated into Tamil that Indo-Aryan metric forms and principles were assimilated into the Tamil system of prosody. This gave rise to the new *viruttam* meters of Tamil which were conceptually and etymologically related to the syllabic *vṛtta* forms of Sanskrit. During this period there was a consistent move towards harmonizing the old moraic system of Tamil with the syllabically regulated meters of Sanskrit, thereby creating a hybrid metrical structure. Tiruppāṇāḻvār for example composed ten stanzas, the *Amalaṉātipiṟāṉ* describing Lord Viṣṇu at Śrīraṅgam in what appear to be mixed metrical structures.[406] As Zvelebil states "he seems to have been the one who has in a massive way introduced the *cantam* [Skt. *chandas*] or the rigidly set rhythmical pattern in terms of long and short syllables in Tamil poetry, which started a minor prosodic revolution..." This "revolutionary" process did not however, restrict the growing song-like flow of the *bhakti* poems. In fact the poems were explicitly "intended for singing, [and] most editions of *Tiruppāvai* contain the indications of the melody type (*arākam/rāga*) and of the rhythm (*tāḷam/tāla)* of individual stanzas."[407]

The assortment of Telugu *chandassu* or metrical forms can roughly be divided into two overarching categories that generally fall into place according to Sanskrit versus Dravidian metrical principles, namely the *akṣara* based *vṛtta* forms and the *acca* or pure Telugu meters. The most common *vṛtta* forms of Telugu like Śārdūlam, Campakamāla, Utpalamāla and Mattebham are taken directly from the Sanskrit canon, albeit with certain modifications. Surprisingly, the only Sanskrit meters to be appropriated were the large and grandiose forms with fixed rhythmic accentuations of nineteen or more syllables per line. It is interesting to note (as the table below makes clear) that the Mattebham meter is simply a Śardulam meter that substitutes the first *guru akṣara* for two *laghus*, thereby increasing the syllabic count by one but maintining an equivalent number of *mātrās*. The *yati* or caesura markers also shift accordingly to create identical cadential endings. An analogous relationship applies for the Utpalamāla and Campakamāla meters.

Chandas	**Scan**	**Akṣaras**	**Mātrās**	**Yati**
Śārdūlam	— — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ — ; — — ∪ — — ∪ — ma-sa-ja-sa-ta-ta-ga	19	30	13
Mattebham	∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ — ; — — ∪ — — ∪ — sa-bha-ra-na-ma-ya-va	20	30	14

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406 Interestingly this description of Śrīraṅganātha is *pādākeśa* or foot to head, very much in line with the Sanskrit tradition, a convention that is often reversed in Telugu. cf. AM VI.98 and Note V.7.

407 Zvelebil 1974: 101 and 105. Also "part of the process whereby the connection between poetry and music, which began with the adaptation of fixed melody-types (*paṇs*) for poetry identified with devotional singing of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* hymns, becomes closer and closer, more intimate, more organic...." Zvelebil 1974: 109-110.

Utpalamāla	— ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ ; — ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ —			
	bha-ra-na-bha-bha-ra-va	20	28	10
Campakamāla	∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ ; — ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ —			
	na-ja-bha-ja-ja-ja-ra	21	28	11

As the meters were localized so to say, Telugu poets slackened the strict adherence to caesura rules and permitted the practice of complex enjambment wherein words and semantic units could flow across line breaks. These innovations were not seen as metrical degradations but rather as techniques that a poet could (or rather should) use to "hide" the underlying metric cadences, heighten the rhythmic tension and ultimately display an acute mastery over prosodic forms. This kind of appropriation, modification and development of metrical elements from Sanskrit is just another example of the vernacular process at work. Now, not only the Sanskrit cultural ethos and literary corpus, but the science of metrics as well, was localized and diffused among the regional languages.

In contrast to these grand meters that were often used for ornate descriptions and complex metaphoric images, the Telugu poet also had available the indigenous or *acca* meters of Telugu such as Āṭavĕladi, Teṭagīti and Sīsa which were based on a novel set of prosodic principles.

Chandas	**Scan**	**Gaṇas**
Tetagīti	every *pāda*	1 Sūrya + 2 Indra + 2 Sūrya
Āṭavĕlaḍi	odd *pāda* even *pāda*	3 Sūrya + 2 Indra 5 Sūrya
Sīsa	first four *pādas* + one Tetagīti or Āṭavĕlaḍi *padyam*	6 Indra + 2 Sūrya
Kanda	odd *pāda* even *pāda*	3 Catur-Mātra 5 Catur-Mātra

These unique metrical forms were surely derived from old Dravidian folk meters that were in use throughout the Andhra country well before the vernacular moment. The poems written in these elegantly compact meters often reflect the lilting flow of Dravidian folk idioms. In addition they are often employed for dialogues or extended narrative passages where several of these stanzas can be strung together to create a flow that mimics the oral story-telling tradition that these meters seem to have evolved from. For example, in the extended dream sequence at the beginning of *Āmuktamālyada,* Āndhra Viṣṇu speaks to Kṛṣṇadevarāya in pure Telugu meters. There is also the long dialogic section in Chapter V when Goda speaks with her friends, a passage that clearly resembles the spoken rhythms (and emotions) found in the *akam* poetry of Sangam times. Below is a metrical analysis of AM V.41 in the Teṭagīti meter (translated above) that reveals both the line diversity and rhythmic complexity of these native structures:

tānu sura māuni nṛpa tanul dālci yakaṭa
kāminī tatin uḍikiñcukaṇṭĕn aṭṭĕ

gaṇḍĕyunu nalla dāsarigāḍu kiriyu
hariyun aipovuṭaya mañcid-anuyugambu

— ∪ / ∪ ∪ — ∪ , ∪ ∪ ∪ — / — ∪ , ∪ ∪ ∪
— ∪ / — ∪ ∪ , ∪ ∪ — ∪ / — ∪ , — ∪
— ∪ / ∪ ∪ — ∪ , — ∪ ∪ / — ∪ , ∪ ∪ ∪
∪ ∪ ∪ / — — ∪ , ∪ — ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ , — ∪

Unlike the *vṛtta* meters which are analyzed by the Sanskrit *trika* system in which eight groupings of three syllables each account for all the permutations of long and short syllables, the *acca* Telugu meters are defined by the fascinating Sūrya and Candra *gaṇas*, a prosodic schemata unique to Telugu. Unlike the Sanskrit *gaṇas* these groupings have no exclusive connection to *akṣara*, nor are they purely moraic like the old Tamil meters. As the table below illustrates, the *trika gaṇas* must all have three *akṣaras* regardless of moraic count, whereas as the *catur-mātra gaṇas* must all have four *mātrās* regardless of syllabic count. The Sūrya and Indra *gaṇas* of Telugu fall somewhere in between these two poles and are, in essence, a dynamic synthesis of the two dominant prosodic principles that defined Indic literature. What is interesting in regard to vernacularization is that the Telugu grammarians continued to define the Sūrya and Indra *gaṇas* with the traditional *trika* formulation of Sanskrit metrics.

	Gaṇa	**Mātra**	**Akṣara**
Trika			
ya	∪ — —	5	3
ma	— — —	6	3
ta	— — ∪	5	3
ra	— ∪ —	5	3
ja	∪ — ∪	4	3
bha	— ∪ ∪	4	3
na	∪ ∪ ∪	3	3
sa	∪ ∪ —	4	3
Catur-Mātra			
na-la	∪ ∪ ∪ ∪	4	4
sa	∪ ∪ —	4	3
ja	∪ — ∪	4	3
bha	— ∪ ∪	4	3
ga-ga	— —	4	2
Indra			
na-la	∪ ∪ ∪ ∪	4	4
na-ga	∪ ∪ ∪ —	5	4
sa-la	∪ ∪ — ∪	5	4
bha	— ∪ ∪	4	3
ra	— ∪ —	5	3
ta	— — ∪	5	3

Sūrya			
na	∪ ∪ ∪	3	3
ha	— ∪	3	2

There is one final Telugu meter known as Kanda which seems almost identical to the forms of ancient Tamil. It is a purely beat-based or *mātrā*-based meter and is made up of units that all equal four beats. The *catur-mātra-gaṇas* used to create Kanda stanzas are strikingly similar to the *ner* and *nirai* units that underlie all of Tamil prosody. Overall, it is clear that the Telugu metrical system borrowed significantly from Sanskrit *chandas* while simultaneously developing native folk meters which were related to Tamil prosodic forms and principles, thereby forging a uniquely Telugu approach to meter and poetic rhythm.

Here is one verse from *Āmuktamālyada* written in the famed Kavirāja Virājitam that will make clear how even a glorious Sanskrit meter of twenty-three syllables, when adopted into Telugu, can exhibit the song-like flow and repetitive rhythms of Tamil *bhakti* poetry. This lyrical verse is sung by Viṣṇucitta at a critical moment in the story when he is seated on a royal elephant and receives *darśana* of Lord Viṣṇu. The preceding verse tells us how he uses the "elephant bells like a cymbal beat."

jaya jaya dānava dāraṇa kāraṇa śarṅga rathāṅga gadāsidharā
jaya jaya candradinendra śatāyuta sāndra śarīramaḥ prasarā
jaya jaya tāmara sodara-sodara cārupadojghita gāṅgajharā
jaya jaya keśava keśiniṣūdana śauriśarajjalajākṣa harī

Jaya jaya wielder of sword and wheel, of bow and mace
summoned to split the demon race!
Jaya jaya splendor of a thousand suns, and a million moons
lustrous body black and hewn!
Jaya jaya source of the Gaṅga's flow, sprung from lotus feet below
emerging pure with a pistil's glow!
Jaya jaya killer of the demon Keśi! King of Ka and Lord of Īśa!
Jaya jaya Hari, in the line of Śūra
whose eyes are like the autumn.[408]

Below is a metrical scan of the first line with two different forms of *gaṇa* analysis.

jaya ja- ya dāna- va dāra- ṇa kāra- ṇa śarṅga rathāṅga gadāsi dharā
∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ — ∪ / ∪ — ∪ / ∪ — ∪ / ∪ — ∪ / ∪ — ∪ / ∪ — ∪ / ∪ —

jaya jaya dānava dāraṇa kāraṇa śarṅgara-thāṅga ga- dāsidharā
∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ / — ∪∪ / — ∪∪ / — ∪∪ / — ∪∪ / — ∪∪ / — ∪ / ∪ —

In the Sanskrit *trika* classification, the poem is described with *gaṇas* as na-ja-ja-ja-ja-ja-ja-va. This analysis, however, belies the underlying rhythmic structure of the verse which is vocally

[408] AM IV.16.

parsed more like na-la-bha-bha-bha-bha-bha-ha-va, making it appear like a Telugu meter composed of six Indra *gaṇas* and two Sūrya *gaṇas*. Again, the Telugu poet's main goal was to use grand meters in a way that was not obvious – hiding the underlying structures at times, highlighting them at others, never becoming monotonous and always creating something refreshing.

One further poetic technique used by Telugu poets was rhyme, or *toṭai* as it is sometimes known in Tamil. This particular feature is almost entirely absent in Sanskrit poetry. It is attested to in old Sangam Tamil and becomes increasingly more visible in the later poems of the *bhakti* period. Unlike the common end-rhyme of English, the most prevalent usages of "rhyme" in South Asia are word-initial rhyme, or the fascinating second-syllable rhyme, known as *dvitīyākṣara-prāsa* in Telugu. Here the second syllable (*akṣara* regardless of vowel marker) of each line is repeated across each of the four *pādas* or lines. This form known as *etukai* in Tamil became a common feature of later poets and can be seen consistently in the poems of Āṇṭāḷ and other *bhakti* poets. In Telugu, this feature of second-syllable rhyme became a standardized element of Telugu poetics and was developed to an exacting degree. What is most fascinating is that *dvitīyākṣara-prāsa*, a distinctly South Indian feature, was carefully grafted unto to the large Sanskrit *vṛtta* meters rather than the indigenous Telugu meters.[409] Here is one poem from *Āmuktamālyada* in which Kṛṣṇadevarāya displays the repetition of not just one but three syllables or *tri-prāsa*.

mī pāḍina hari-candamu
l-epāḍinan talapa vaccun itaḍe satulan
kāpāḍina vāḍanugai
tropāḍina tannu valaci tŏyyalulārā[410]

'O Friends! Those songs you've sung of Viṣṇu's deeds
I don't think they're fair. All the women
who truly loved him, were left without a care.[411]

Unlike in Sanskrit, or even Tamil to a lesser extent, Telugu poets rarely employed a single meter for a whole section, let alone an entire *āśvāsam* or chapter. In the *sarga-kāvyas* of Sanskrit for example, poets like Kālidāsa would very consciously choose one particular meter for an entire canto in order to create a sense of expressive flow and sustained emotional impact. Even in Tamil *bhakti* poetry the practice of using a single meter for an entire section was common. Āṇṭāḷ's *Tirrupāvai* for example is completely written in the *kalippā* meter of eight four-feet lines. Her *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* as well uses one of five meters (mostly of the *viruttam* form) for each of the fourteen separate decads. In Telugu *kāvya* there is no poetic stipulation on the continuous use of a single meter. In fact, poetic acumen in Telugu is judged in part by how well the poet can artfully modulate meter to serve poetic expression. Along with a technique like complex enjambment, metrical variance provided the Telugu poet with a powerful ability to regulate poetic rhythm, both within and between poems.

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[409] These meters include Āṭavĕladi, Teṭagīti and Sīsa which are based on the Sūrya and Candra *gaṇas* but not the *catur-mātric* Kanda form in which *dvitīyākṣara-prāsa* does occur.
[410] *pā-ḍi-na* appears in each line as *pāḍina* (sung), *pāḍinan* (justly), *kāpāḍina* (saved) and *tropāḍina* (fell).
[411] AM V.40.

The diverse variety and usage of the Telugu meters, be they Sanskritic or Dravidian in origin, mirror the complexities of Telugu lexical possibilities. In other words, both the Telugu language and the Telugu prosodic system were judiciously drawing on the two dominant traditions of South Asia. Rhythm and lexeme are the two essential components of diction, and as such, the Telugu poetic language is a constant negotiation, exploitation and inversion of idiomatic registers. And although it would be easy to equate this modality to a simple case of rhythmic and linguistic diglossia, the poems themselves evidence a far more complex scenario. The *acca* Telugu meters do often use a higher percentage of Dravidian vocabulary, but this was not always the case, as in the Tĕṭagīti verse AM V.41 cited above. The same is true for the long Indo-Aryan meters where long Sanskrit compounds are often used, but not everywhere as in Śārdūlam verse below which is filled with a highly colloquial Dravidian syntax and idiom. The western punctuations in the Telugu citation which evidence the angularity of conversational speech are taken directly from the printed text.

poniṇḍanna, vayasyali iṭlani (r)agumbo nikkam, iṅkippuḍe
kānimm, iṅkŏka kŏnta sepāṭiki ne kānī. sakhī, yĕlli ye
kānī, nī nuḍi tan-manojña guṇamul kānī, tat-anyāyamu-
lkānī, cindina cinta nīk atani pai kāk-ĕvvarin telcĕde?

And her friends responded–
'You're right! We'll keep quiet.
But soon enough, maybe even right now,
perhaps later, or maybe tomorrow
you'll tell us about his beauty
you'll tell us about his cruelty.
O friend, who are you trying to fool?
It's clear you're filled with thoughts of him.[412]

In essence the Telugu poet had a wide array of poetic tools available in the construction of rhythmically and lexically complex verses. Sanskrit and Dravidian forms, principles, idioms and styles were skillfully combined and mixed in a highly productive manner that gave rise to the unique and powerfully expressive nature of classical Telugu poetry.

[412] AM V.59. cf. AM V.58 cited above which is written in the fully moraic Kanda meter.

CHAPTER 5
Translating *Āmuktamālyada*

5.1 Text and Commentators

Unlike the highly Sanskrit educated brahman poets at the Vijayanagara court, the poet-king Kṛṣṇadevarāya boldly took inspiration from the Tamil south. In particular he was heavily influenced by Śrīvaiṣṇavism and the *bhakti* devotionalism of the mystic Āḻvār saints. He reworked the hagiographic accounts of the poetess Āṇṭāḷ and her devout father Viṣṇucitta into the centerpiece of his master narrative. Most other Telugu poets began their works with a traditional eulogy of bygone poets, the so-called *pūrva-kavi-stuti*. This praise usually began with the great Sanskrit poets like Kālidāsa and Bāna and subsequently moved to the famous *kavi-trayam* of Telugu – Nannaya, Tikkana and Errapragada. The eulogy is absent in *Āmuktamālyada*, not because the poet did not respect his poetic forbearers, but rather because his invocatory homage went out to the poet-saints of the Tamil tradition, the great Āḻvārs themselves who composed the *Divya Prabandham*. If these initial praise poems are considered to be primary mechanizations of canonization, then Kṛṣṇadevarāya's departure from the established norm certainly poses a reorientation of the received notions concerning a Telugu literary canon.

The poet-king's apparent anti-establishmentarianism was likely due to the fact that he was a supreme monarch and a gifted poet, haughty enough, politically and poetically, to abandon such literary prescriptions. He was also a king of humble origins and his radicalism is mirrored in the actions of non-courtly poets like Pālkuriki Somanātha who never mention the name of other poets, disavow patrons excepting gurus, and reject the use of Sanskritic sources. For Kṛṣṇadevarāya, no individual could be patron to one who was the greatest patron of all. His only commission was from god, and his only dedication was to god. In a complex and fascinating way, Kṛṣṇadevarāya is a compelling harmonizer of the *mārga* and *deśi* traditions within Telugu literary evolution. Southern modalities were infused into the tradition with the concomitant vibrancy, devotionalism and iconoclasm of *bhakti* influences. At a critical peak moment in South Asian literary history, Kṛṣṇadevarāya synthesized a dynamic poetic idiom that would never again be replicated.

Āmuktamālyada is ranked as one of the *pañca-mahā-kāvyamulu*, or five ornate long poems of classical Telugu literature.[413] Each verse as Sistla simply but eloquently puts it reveals a whole new world.[414] The text's poetic beauty and complexity has been praised for centuries but it has sorely remained an underresearched text. One reason for this lacuna could be the Kṛṣṇadevarāya's extremely difficult diction and unconventional poetic style, or as Narayana Rao and Shulman put it, "language is radically deroutinized, both lexically and syntactically."[415] The Telugu tradition itself seems to have recognized this challenging reality when it classified the text as *nārikeḷa-pākam*, or coconut style. Unlike the progressively easier *kadaḷi-pākam* (banana style) or *drākṣā-pākam* (grape style), Kṛṣṇadevarāya's verses were hard and difficult to crack like a coconut, requiring both time and energy to relish, a reader is challenged to break open a hard outer shell to enjoy the sweet, juicy fruit within. Sistla comments on the challenges in even understanding the text when he states: "perhaps with exception of a few stanzas, it would be difficult to comprehend the poem in original Telugu, even with aid of dictionaries; by all means

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[413]The other four are Allasāni Pĕddana's *Manu Caritram*, Nandi Timmana's *Pārijāta Apaharaṇamu*, Rāmarājabhūṣana's *Vasu Caritramu* and Tĕnāli Rāmakṛṣṇa's *Pāṇḍuraṅga Māhātmyamu*.

[414] Sistla 2010: 22.

[415] NRS 167.

it requires the aid of an elaborate commentary written by a scholar well-versed in Telugu and Sanskrit, and even a few other languages."[416]

Fortunately we do have a few important published commentaries on *Āmuktamālyada* which are indubitably indispensable to any researcher. In 1869 Vavilla Rama Swami Sastrulu prepared the first print edition of the text and further wrote his *Ruci-vyākhya* commentary as an aid for students of Telugu literature. Later in 1927 the renowned Telugu pandit Vedam Venkata Raya Sastry wrote his *Sañjīvani-vyākhya* which was intended for scholarly analysis and research. Both of these commentaries were written in *grānthika* or classical Telugu for the consumption of well-educated readers. In 2001 Tummapudi Koteswara Rao produced his *Soundarya-lahari-vyākhya* commentary based on both of his predecessors and rendered in modern Telugu. Throughout the translations presented herein I have relied heavily on the commentaries of Vedam Venkata Raya Sastry and Tummapudi Koteswara Rao. The work of these pioneering modern age scholars was largely based on decaying manuscripts. The Madras archive still houses several complete and incomplete palm-leaf folios dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some surely collected under the auspices of C. P. Brown's laboriously painstaking text preservation project.[417] What is fascinating, and at the same time lamentable, is that there once existed more than thirty Telugu commentaries on *Āmuktamālyada* written by various pandits. Many have completely disappeared over time while others exist only in decrepit manuscripts.

5.2 Selection of Poems

The core narrative of the *Āmuktamālyada* epic is the story of Āṇṭāḷ, or Goda Devi as she is known in Andhra country and throughout the text. The grand *kāvya* contains some 875 verses (*padyālu*) and prose passages (*vacanālu*) divided into six (or sometimes seven) chapters.[418] Like most Telugu *prabandhas* the work is filled with several descriptive (though often tangential) sections that serve to create an extremely rich and textured poetic world. The structure of the text is reminiscent of a Telugu proverb that says *annam kanna ādaravule ekkuva* – "there are more side dishes than rice!" And although some scholars have criticized this facet of the work, arguing that it retards the narrative flow, most pandits agree that the text is only enhanced by these vivid substories. The translation below endeavors to present a more readable distillation of the main text with a focus on the central story of Goda Devi and the work's most notable poetic sections.

Āmuktamālyada begins with an invocation of the poet's *iṣṭa-devata* or chosen deity, Śrī Vĕṅkaṭeśvara, followed by an homage to the twelve great Āḻvār saints.[419] Next the king provides us with a detailed account of his inspiration for writing the book, a dream in which the god Āndhra Viṣṇu appears and commands him to "create a great poem in Telugu." The next 32 stanzas constitute the *vaṁśa-stuti* or praise of lineage brilliantly placed by the king in the mouths of his court pundits. This heavily historical section is largely taken verbatim from the introduction to Pĕddana's *Manu Caritramu* and select verses have been translated in Chapter 3.

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[416] Sistla 2010: 14.

[417] One of the issues that arose due to this mixed manuscript collection was a debate over the number of *āśvāsams* or chapters. Vavilla for example divides the text into seven chapters while Vedam only six. For more information on the history of this philological issue see Sistla 2010: 114-5.

[418] See note above.

[419] cf. Notes I.1-3.

Chapter I, the *prathama-āśvāsamu*, begins at verse I.51 and describes the quaint village of Śrī Villiputtūr, a simple place of pilgrimage in southern Tamil Nadu, home to humble saints and pious devotees.[420] The colorful descriptions paint an idyllic picture of bucolic life in medieval South India and slowly bring the reader into the poet's vibrant imagination. The chapter ends with an introduction to the Vaiṣṇava saint Viṣṇucitta, or Pĕriya Āḻvār as he is known in Tamil. The historical saint, also the foster father of Goda Devi, is one of the most important figures in the Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition and functions as a central character throughout the poem, sometimes overshadowing Goda Devi's importance, so much so that *Āmuktamālyada* is still sometimes referred to as the *Viṣṇucittīyam*.

In contrast to the pastoral setting of the first chapter, Chapter II introduces the famed fortress-city of Madhura, capital of the powerful Pāṇḍya Empire.[421] The ancient fort and the city's towering cityscapes are described in rich detail and compared to the celestial city of Amarāvati. Next comes a short introduction to the Pāṇḍya king before the famous *grīṣma-ṛtu-varṇana* or description of the Summer Season, considered by Telugu pandits to include some of the poet's finest offerings. The chapter ends with a narrative section that sets into motion the events in Chapter III. The Pāṇḍya king is on his way to see a waiting lover when he overhears a brahman reciting a proverb about life's impermanence. Overwhelmed by the powerful words, the king returns to the palace and calls together wise scholars to determine the best way to reach *mokṣa* or spiritual liberation. At exactly the same time, Śrī Mannāru Svāmi, the god of Śrī Villiputtūr, commands Viṣṇucitta to proceed to Madhura and win the debate, assuring the humble *bhakta* that his own divine presence will carry the day.

The beginning of Chapter III is devoted to Viṣṇucitta's brilliant debating skills at the Madhura court. This section functions to highlight Kṛṣṇadevarāya's erudite command of various philosophical doctrines and his familiarity with the major Vedāntic scriptures. The remainder of the chapter (III.14-89) extends Viṣṇucitta's metaphysical discourse by narrating the story of Khāṇḍikya and Keśidhvaja, a philosophical debate between two cousins, originally found in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Though this section is praised for its narrative and dialogic merits, it is often overburdened with technical information that slows the pace of the overall story.

With 289 verses, Chapter IV is by far the largest *āśvāsam* in the poem. Although highly interesting, this long chapter diverges from the main story and I have left much of it untranslated in order to retain the central story's narrative momentum. The beginning of the chapter includes Viṣṇucitta's dramatic victory, his conversion of the Pāṇḍya king to Śrī Vaiṣṇavism and his majestic *daśa-avatāra-stotram* or Praise of the Ten Descents. The remainder of the chapter is the story of Yāmunācarya or Āḻavantār, a renouncer-king, and an important historical figure in the development of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. This side story also contains over 100 poems dedicated to the Rainy Season (*varṣā-kālam*) and Autumn Season (*śārada-ṛtu*). The long chapter finally ends with 82 fascinating verses on *rāja-dharma* or ethical governance, many of which have been translated in Chapter 3.

In many ways, Chapter V is the climax of the epic. The poet finally introduces the story's namesake Goda Devi, the foster daughter of Viṣṇucitta and the earthly embodiment of the goddess Lakṣmi. Kṛṣṇadevarāya artfully describes Goda's adolescent beauty in some 30 elegant stanzas before moving on to a long section of natural dialogue in which the lovelorn Goda describes to her friends the intense pain of her separation from her beloved Lord Viṣṇu. This is

[420] Śrī Villiputtūr, and Śrīraṅgam which is the focus of Chapter VI, are considered holy places, two of the 108 sacred *divya-deśams* of Śrīvaiṣṇava cosmography.

[421] Commentators often contrast the peaceful devotional life of Śrī Villiputtūr (*sattva guṇa*) to the political and commercial bustle of Madhura (*rajas guṇa*).

the section of the poem (including the extensive *nindā-stuti*) that seems to be based in part, or at the very least to have been influenced by, the Tamil *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* and *Tiruppāvai*, two works attributed to the historical Āṇṭāḷ herself. The poetry here exhibits a naturalness of feeling, conveyed through the use of Telugu meter and speech, which directly puts the reader in touch with the varied emotions of the lovesick Goda. The chapter concludes with some 50 stanzas describing the arrival of Spring.

Chapter VI begins with the Māladāsari Katha, a story of a low-caste devotional singer and his encounters with a *dvija-niśācaruḍu,* a brahman ghost named Soma Śarma. Again, this lengthy side story, though praised for its narrative brilliance, deviates from the primary story at a critical juncture in the epic's momentum. At the end of this story, Lord Viṣṇu advises Viṣṇucitta to marry his daughter to the god Raṅganātha. What follows is a detailed description of the great temple complex of Śrīraṅgam, the most important *divya-deśam* for Śrīvaiṣṇavas. Within the sacred temple enclosure, the apotheosis of Goda is fulfilled and she is effectively merged with the Lord. The great poem ends where it began in Śrī Villiputtūr and the marriage of the divine couple is celebrated in traditional South Indian fashion.

This selected translation of *Āmuktamālyada* strives to present the reader with a continuous narration of the story of Goda Devi. Another goal was to convey some part of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's unique and imaginative style of poetic description. For a verse-by-verse analysis of the translated sections, see Appendix I.

5.3 Literary Translation

The translation presented below is an attempt to be both literal and literary, which is to say I have endeavored to remain faithful to the letter and the spirit of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's verses. My goal was to carry over into modern American English an echo of the complex poetic artistry and oscillating rhythms that the poet demonstrates in every poem. Classical Telugu, especially the dense idiomatic style of Kṛṣṇadevarāya, presents the translator with several challenges, not least of which is the negotiation of the varying aesthetic, lexical and rhythmic registers created by the ever-present blend of Sanskrit and Telugu poetics. Many issues of literary translations in these two languages have been discussed by the poet and scholar Hank Heifetz in his 1985 dissertation, and many of the ideas presented there are equally applicable to classical Telugu .[422]

Two of the most fundamental issues that any translator faces are the choices relating rhythm and lexicon, both of which ultimately create diction and voice. In regard to the former I have in no way attempted to translate the Telugu meters directly, or, into any form of English metrical equivalency. This is not to say the cadential flow of each poem did not affect the translations; on the contrary, I always kept the poem's rhythmic pulse firmly fixed in my mind as I composed in English. I have also refrained from adopting end-rhyme or other Western conventional rhythmic schemes that often produce contrived and/or unnatural sounding productions. Rhythm is essential to the translating process and I have followed the insightful advice of Ezra Pound when he says: "As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome."[423] In essence, my use of free verse is an attempt to bring the musical flow of each Telugu poem into rhythmically dynamic English verse.

In regard to lexical choice, Heifetz has spoken at length about the shocking abundance of poor literary translations from South Asian classical languages into English. Often these

[422] "*Issues of Literary Translation from Sanskrit and Tamil*" by Hank Heifetz, University of California, Berkeley, 1985.
[423] Pound 1935: 335.

attempts were marred by the adoption of a language which he has coined Indologese, "a dialect of translatorese" which is stilted by archaic word forms, forced rhythms and a general lack of felicitous expression. In essence, translators of the past often tried to fit the complex classical forms of South Asian literature into the preexisting molds of English verse. The greatest detriment of this approach is loss of emotive expressivity. Every language has a particular flow, and a unique diction bound by time that defines its expressive capacity. In order for a translation "to work," the translator must translate not just words, but ideas, beliefs and, most importantly, feelings and emotions. Because words themselves are so inextricably embedded in culturally specific realities, a translator is challenged to express an entire culture with insufficient equivalencies, stilted metaphrases and inaccurate paraphrases.

This being said, there are some fine translations available of Sanskrit *kāvya* and Tamil Sangam literature.[424] Translation is an ongoing process and one that needs generational updating as the target language changes both in terms of diction, but more importantly, in regard to how people interpret the past, and the literatures embedded within it. As was the case in South Asia at the dawn of the second millennium when Sanskrit lost expressive force, the stuffy Victorian English found in most South Asian translations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became vapid and emotively lackluster to modern readers. Language must be updated to suit the times, for literature, like society, is a living, breathing entity that finds expression in the present rather than an imagined past or future.

Examples of Translations

In his introduction to his 2010 English translation of *Āmuktamālyada*, Srinivas Sistla humbly admits that his translation "may contain a few not so accurate renderings." The sheer linguistic difficulty and conceptual complexity of the text, along with the varied and sometimes ambiguous interpretations of commentaries, makes this statement true for any translator of *Āmuktamālyada*. As a prelude to the selected translations, here is a brief comparison of the famous invocatory verse from *Āmuktamālyada* (AM I.1) as presented by a variety of scholars. In her 1989 *Goda's Garland of Devotion* Prema Nandakumar presents the following:

> The pendant of Lakshmi's necklace reflects Him;
> She is seen in the lovely Kaustubha gem.
> Their loving presence within
> Is now imagined outside, as it were,
> Shining through the divine bodies crystal-pure.
> To this Venkateswara, I bow in devotion.

While Adapa Ramakrishna Rao in 1995 offered:

> His form clearly appears in the pendant,
> worn by Lakshmi in a necklace of pearls;
> and the image of Lakshmi is reflected
> in the Kaustubha gem on his bosom;
> the forms of the two
> enshrined in their pure hearts,

[424] See Ramanujan 1967 and 1983, Heifetz 1986, Hart and Heifetz 1988 and 1999, etc.

thus seem to have emerged outward;
I offer worship to Sri Venkateswara ,
thus graciously seated with Sri.

Although these poems are accurate from a literal point of view, they lack the flowing rhythm of the original Telugu verse. Narayana Rao and Shulman offer further variant renderings of the same poem in their 2002 anthology:

He can be seen on the goddess,
in the sheen of her pendant.
And she is there on the jewel he wears,

as if their images of one another
that had been held inside them
had come out clearly, and were mirrored.

Such is the lord of Venkatam,
the god I serve.[425]

The very first line of the poem "He can be seen on the goddess" is overly colloquial sounding for a poem with such a dignified tone and elevated beauty. This lowering of speech register to quotidian level seems to mark most of Shulman's translations, a technique that possible attempts to render these tough poems more accessible. Unfortunately the end result is a degradation of the elevated and highly refined construction of the original Telugu. Sistla himself offers two different versions of the same poem in the latest available translation (2010):

Sri Venkata-*bharta*! I pray to thee!
As Laxmi and Venkateswara face each other,
The *kaustubha* pendant of the necklace
Dangling over his chest
Reflects her face in it!
The pendant of the pearl necklace
Dangling over her bosom
Reflects his face in it!

These reflections indeed appear
Like the images of their beloved
Enshrined by them in their bodies
Visible through their clear hearts!

And later in the main translation:

Sri's clear and charming reflection

[425] NRS 168. The variant translation alters the last line from "the god I serve" to "the god I love." It is quite common for translators to have different renderings, but often the substantive meaning remains fairly intact. A similar change occurs in Narayana Rao's translation of AM I.13 in NRS versus Narayana Rao 1995.

In the *kaustubha* pendant of His necklace,
His clear reflection
In the pendant of her pearl necklace,
Appear like the images of their beloved
Enshrined by them in their respective bodies
Visible through their pure and clear hearts!
O Venkata-*bharta*, I pray to thee!

The second is certainly a poetic improvement over the first, but it's still stilted by a diction that exposes Sistla's non-nativity in the target language. Translation is no easy task but I hope that my productions will first and foremost be faithful to the meaning, flow and emotional impact of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's poems. Second, I hope that my verses flow in modern American English, not as translations per say, but as genuine English poetry. Like Nannaya who did not translate, but rather transcreated the *Mahābhāratam* into Telugu, I have tried to recreate *the experience* of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's epic *Āmuktamālyada*. My translation of AM I.1 begins the translation and stands on the lofty shoulders of the many scholars who came before.

5.4 Translation[426]

INVOCATION

I.1
He is seen in the sparkle of her lovely jewelled necklace
and She is reflected in his radiant Kaustubha Gem,
as if the image of the other that each held within their hearts
was coming into view, their bodies merging
crystal pure into a single being.
To this magnificent Lord of Věṅkaṭa, I offer my salutations.

I.2
From time to time Viṣṇu casts a loving glance towards Lakṣmi
and as they descend towards Earth to enjoy each other
the endless serpent Ādiśeṣa raises his broad flat hoods
creating a hall of moonlight to illuminate their love.
I worship you Ananta, eternally existing, beyond the passing aeons.

I.3
When the King of Birds flaps his powerful wings
the waters of the ocean are swept into heaven,
revealing the snakes of hell, who out of sheer terror
wrap themselves into spiral coils.
The submarine mare of fire fills the sky with brilliant lightning
and the rushing wind rattles through giant caves
turning Meru and Mandara into a pair of drums.
Massive trees for his nest are whisked away like tiny broken twigs
and whole villages are hurled and cast in every direction!
The mighty storm of Garuḍa's wings turns the whole world
upside down, dispersing sins like heaps of cotton.

I.4
With just a slight gesture of his brow,
Viṣṇu gives his general the command to commence creation.
And with a mere flick of the tip of his staff
Viśvaksena brings the whole world into being
like a potter using a stick to spin his wheel.
Now I seek refuge in this golden staff of creation.

I.5
When Hari breathes in, to blow his conch
the air passes over the blackened mire of sin
sucking out the life force from demon after demon.

[426] The following translated verses are in large part taken from Reddy's *Giver of the Worn Garland: Krishnaadevarāya's Āmuktamālyada*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010.

And when he breathes out, the bees that swarm at his lotus lap
are drawn towards his mouth by his fragrant breath.
O Pāñcajanyam, white and radiant like a full moon night
everything around you is purified.

I.6
Viṣṇu's sword is like a sparkling lampstand
shining bright with the light of knowledge.
A golden crocodile with a mouth of fire
rests at its hilt, flickering like a flame
while kāṭuka rises like wisps of smoke.
Brilliant Nandaka! You sever every sin
like a sword through a heap of creeper vines.

I.7
When Sāḷva King of the Demons created a city in the sky
surrounded by a rampart of gems, Kṛṣṇa King of the Yādavas
flew through the heavens with his long powerful arms
and smashed through the city with his celestial mace,
adding that city's golden enclosure to his many adorning bracelets.
To the divine weapon Kaumodika,
decorated with a garland of heavenly flowers, I offer my prayers.

I.8
When Viṣṇu was ready to shower a volley of arrows
upon the demon Sumāli, the mighty Sāraṅga bow said–
'O Hari, let me protect you!
You transformed the hunchbacked Trivakra
into a slender maiden with beautiful hair.
Bring out my true nature too, for I have three curves like her.
Grab the middle of my bow and bend the two ends inward!'

I.9
When Rāhu swallowed the elixir of the gods
Sudarśana quickly chopped off his head
and forced immortal juice to come pouring out his mouth.
The other demons looked on as thick blood spurt from his neck
like a wide pot, under tall flames
bubbling and boiling with seething rage.
To this divine discus Sudarśana, I offer my salutations.

I.10
To escape the intense heat of the twelve Āditya suns
Viṣṇu resides in the cool loving hearts of the twelve Āḻvār saints,
intoxicated by the sweet cascades of nectar that fill their lotus minds.
In my search for salvation I honour these luminous bodies,
twelve blessed souls of the earth.

THE DREAM

I.11

Some time ago I set out on a campaign to expand my empire and conquer the Kaliṅga country. I marched to Vijayavāḍa with my army and camped in Śrīkākulam for a few days. There at the temple of Āndhra Viṣṇu I worshipped the Lord on his special day of fasting, and then, during the fourth watch of the night. . .

I.12

Āndhra Viṣṇu appeared to me in a dream–
  his lustrous black body made the rain clouds look pale
  and his bright wide eyes put the lovely lotus to shame,
  his golden silk clothes outshined Garuḍa's wings,
  and his Kaustubha Gem eclipsed the red rising sun.
  Lakṣmi appeared there too, carrying a lotus in one hand
  and holding his hand with the other,
  her kind face removed all my desires
  and her gentle smile emanated true compassion.
Then Viṣṇu spoke to me–

I.13

'You composed the *Story of Madālasa* and the *Pleasures of Satyabhāma*
and delighted connoisseurs with your natural usage
of hyperbole, metaphor, subtle suggestion and sarcasm.
You selected the best episodes from the Vedas and the Purāṇas
and compiled the *Abridged Essence of All Stories*.
With great poetic skill you wrote the *Jewel of Wisdom*
that could dispel the sins of any listener,
and your *Handbook on Aesthetics*
was praised by scholars for its sweet poetry.

All of these works you wrote in Sanskrit,
but is it impossible to compose poetry in Telugu?
Create a great poem in Telugu for my pleasure!

I.14

'If you ask, "Which of your forms shall I remember?"
Listen, for I shall tell you.
Recount the story of my wedding in Śrīraṅgam
for I am a Telugu king and you are the King of Kannaḍa!
Long ago I grudgingly accepted a garland offered by a man.
Make up for this misdeed by describing
the pleasure of receiving a gift from your beloved.
Tell the story of my dear Āmuktamālyada, Giver of the Worn Garland.

I.15
‘If you ask, “Why Telugu?”
It is because this is Telugu country and I am a Telugu king.
Telugu is one of a kind.
After speaking with all the kings that serve you, didn’t you realize–
amongst all the regional languages, Telugu is the best!

I.16
‘If you ask, “To whom shall I dedicate this work?”
Offer it to your favorite Lord Věṅkaṭeśvara, for I am He.
Though we differ in name and appearance
we are one and the same.

I.17
‘If you compose this book
your future will grow brighter and brighter!’
And with these words he disappeared.
At dawn I awoke astonished and performed the proper rituals,
and with the utmost devotion I offered my salutations
to the central temple spire.

I.18
Early that morning I held court. I called together my generals and vassals, but quickly dismissed them back to their camps. Then I summoned together various wise men and scholars, honoured them and related my most wondrous dream. They were amazed and overjoyed. They said –

‘O lord! The fact that the God of gods came to you in a dream foretells a series of auspicious events. Listen.

First, the appearance of the Lotus-Eyed God means that your devotion will grow still stronger. The fact that he commanded you to compose an epic poem promises that your knowledge of literature will deepen still further.

And because Śrī appeared there beside him, your treasury will grow even more abundant. And the hundred-petalled lotus in her hand symbolizes that you will acquire the emblematic white parasol of a mighty emperor.

The god's words carry meaning as well– 'After speaking with all the kings that serve you' predicts that you will easily attract many more vassals, and 'If you compose this book your future will grow brighter and brighter' foretells that you will have many more wives, and many more children, who will live long and uphold the greatness of your glorious Turvasu lineage.

These auspicious omens are truly wonderful. Listen and heed the words of the Lord.’

[I.19 – I.49 Vaṁśa Stuti – In this section Kṛṣṇadevarāya offers an extended *vaṁśa-stuti* or praise of the Tuḷuva lineage in thirty-two verses. The poet has tactfully placed these poems in the voices of his court pandits. The non-self-effacing nature of the king's judgement is further substantiated by the fact that a majority of these poems are taken verbatim from the *vaṁśa-stuti* in Allasāni Pĕddana's *Manu Caritramu* (see Appendix II for a concordonce of verses). The first fourteen poems extol the deeds of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's illustrious *candra-vaṁśa* ancestors and the founders of the Vijayanagara empire. The lineage is tracked back from Narasimha (Kṛṣṇadevarāya's father) to Īśvara, and from Timma to Turuvasu, the founder of the Tuḷuva dynasty who ultimately descended from Yayāti and in turn Candra. The next twelve verses praise Kṛṣṇadevarāya himself and include a glorification of his militaty exploits against the Gajapatis and the Yavanas. Verses I.46 – I.49 are four *ṣaṣṭhyantas* or praise verses to god written in the genitive case or *ṣaṣthi vibhakti* and used as markers to end the epic's prologue.]

I.50
Here is my epic poem *Āmuktamālyada*, Giver of the Worn Garland. The story begins like this. . .

CHAPTER I

ŚRĪ VILLIPUTTŪR

I.51
The town of Śrī Villiputtūr is the glittering jewelled bŏṭṭu
that adorns the face of the Pāṇḍya kingdom.
There, ornamental birds made of sapphire and emerald
decorate the eaves of golden mansions and almost start to sing,
as if echoing the chattering of cuckoos and parrots
who live in the town's row of beautiful gardens.

I.52
The countless mansions are like Indra's famed palace-
roofs gilded with golden tiles, and crimson towers
inlaid with lotus buds made of pink rubies
like a tall proud warrior on the eve of battle
decked in golden armour and capped with a shining helmet.

I.53
All along the lanes, mansion doors can be seen
in a long neat row, straight as a tautly pulled string.
The auspicious conch and discus, etched on either side of the doors
are reflected in the jewelled verandas, and the garlands of gems
that hang over the doorways become wedding crowns
in the imaginations of women from neighbouring villages
who visit Śrī Villiputtūr in hopes of finding a husband.

The front terrace steps are engraved with emerald elephants
like the Eight Guardian Elephants emerging from the primordial ocean covered in blue-green algae. Above them, ornamental lions
sneak up on the elephants and swallow their heads,
leaving nothing behind but their dangling trunks.

Two of these elephants and a women from the street
are mirrored in the golden waters in front of the mansion,
appearing like the goddess Lakṣmi
bathed by a pair of splashing elephants.

I.54-I.55
The breasts of the Pāṇḍya women are daubed with coral-colored
kuṁkum, red as the tender fruit of the tall coconut trees
that line the diamond-paved lanes of the town.

There, beautiful mansion gateways
cleaned with dung and painted with muggulu
seem to be decorated with no effort at all.

The multi-jewelled mansions are studded with so many
precious stones that the sea has been plundered of its treasures,
so in hope of retaining a few last gems
the Ocean barters away his first wife, the river Gaṅga
and his sons, the wish-granting trees of heaven.

I.56
In the gardens of Śrī Villiputtūr
Drāviḍa women bathe in oval ponds filled with red water lilies,
and after smearing themselves with holy turmeric
they tenderly collect lotuses for their morning pūja.

Walking along garden paths with flowers in their hands
and water jugs swaying at their hips, their silver anklets glitter and jingle
as they happily return home singing songs of devotion.

I.57
Silver fish glimmer in the pure clear water
of sapphire-ringed roadside wells,
as noisy groups of kingfisher birds swoop down
from tall tree branches to catch their prey.
    Up and down they go
    like the bouncing balls
    of playful Drāviḍa girls.

I.58
Lotus-Eyed Lakṣmi and Nārāyaṇa each have a temple chariot
engraved with beautiful scenes of lovemaking-
where couples play in valley caves, nestled between
the mountains called Meru and Mandara.

Though these mighty mountains give the gods
their home and life-giving nectar,
they ask the tall buildings of Śrī Villiputtūr to judge who's better,
for these lofty mansions provide
both food and shelter for the needy.

I.59
Groups of temple courtesans play games on their verandas
and as they shake the dice with one hand, their braids come undone
so when they lift up the other hand to fix their hair
their tight silken blouses and perfect breasts are revealed
like the soft round pillows of the God of Love.
And as they throw the dice, the mere jingle of their bracelets
is enough to stir the hearts of solitary sages.

When Kāma with his safflower arrows crosses their path
they don't even raise their faces to look at him,
for they treat him like any other petty lover.
But when priests walk by,
they stop their games, stand up, and reverently offer their salutations.
So jealous are men that even proud Indra desires
to serve Lord Viṣṇu
so that he too can garner such loving attention.

Whenever they hear conches from Viṣṇu's temple,
signaling the time for prasādam,
they quickly turn their heads, and that darting glimmer
from the corner of their eyes
pierces the hearts of the townsmen.

I.60
With a single grain of unhusked rice
they clean their pān-stained teeth
until they shine like moonlight.

And with a fine piece of white cloth they daub their freshly bathed bodies
with yellow turmeric, so gently, the cloth remains unstained.
With their cīras already on, they slip their hands underneath their blouses
and caress themselves with perfumed paste.

And if a necklace happens to break in the passion of lovemaking
they pay no heed to the precious pearls that lie scattered across the floor.
These lotus-faced courtesans learned in language and poetry
can quickly assess the status of any man that approaches them,
but even if an old lover is put out, they always treat him well.
The king himself wanders their quarter as if it was his outside harem.

I.61
The ladies of Śrī Villiputtūr throw away tarnished gold jewellery
for fine pearl necklaces and gem-studded bracelets.
They ditest greasy civet fragrance
and only use the finest antelope musk to scent their bodies.
They refuse fresh flowers
and only perfume their hair with the sweetest sandalwood smoke.
And they push aside thick heavy clothes for sāris made of silk.

I.62
At dawn, courtesans stand under rooftop eaves
and pull their black hair between their breasts to untie their braids,
and as they flick away last night's withered flowers
with their long trim nails, honey bees emerge and buzz away.

Lustful men see this scene and fantasize
that the courtesans are playing a double-gourd vīṇa,
a sweet tune rising as they quickly move their hands
across the ivory frets.

I.63
With their girlfriends' spiteful comments in their ears
courtesans reject the desires of poor, old and ugly men.
They even turn down the wealthiest man
for these women, with ears like the letter *śrī*, are already rich.

I.64
After Drāviḍa housewives prepare their bath
by rubbing sticks of turmeric in the waters of their bathing ponds,
white-winged swans fall asleep near the jewel-encrusted steps
and stain their feathers a deep rich yellow,
so bright, that when they waddle through the town
people see them as the golden swans of heaven
descended from the celestial river.

I.65
In the waterways of rich paddy fields
ducks tuck their heads into their thick white plumage and fall asleep.
The watchmen think, 'These must be the clothes, squeezed dry
and left behind by the brahmans who bathed here in the morning!'
And as they dive into the water to fetch and return the clothes,
the ducks scatter, while the girls, huddled and watching from the fields
start to laugh.

I.66
Mango trees and date palms burst with fruit blossoms
and beautiful flowers of jasmine, chrysanthemum,
safflower and oleander are in their full bloom
but the prized Rājanam rice is flowerless,
so as the shiny stalks bend, and point towards
the surrounding gardens, flying cranes think
the rice is mocking the flowers.

I.67
Rice stalks bend down towards the abundant red lotuses
that surround the ripe paddy ready for harvest,
and as the breeze spreads out across the drained fields
prickly rice thorns brush up against soft flower petals
as if thirsty roots had come up to drink that sweet lotus honey.

I.68
At the foot of jackfruit trees
fruits as big as boulders burst open with pulp
and attract a string of honeybees from every direction
like Spring's royal elephant gone wild, oozing liquid
from dusty temples, held in check by iron chains.

I.69
In the plantain groves of Śrī Villiputtūr
clusters of yellow bananas hang down
like big round wreaths, woven with leaves
and flowers from giant chrysanthemums.
Blackened banana tips almost touch the ground
like intoxicated bees who become powerless and faint
having smelled the sweet fragrance of overripe fruit.

I.70
Like an embracing lover, a betel vine wraps itself
around the trunk of an areca palm, and as if saying-
'Let our love grow through a red aphrodisiac,'
the creeper moves from a sagging branch to a nearby sugarcane stalk
splitting it open, spilling juice and pearls into a nearby hearth,
used to prepare sweet molasses and lime.

I.71
In the mango orchards of Śrī Villiputtūr
ancient water tanks smelling of camphor
are filled with purple lilies, white lotuses
and green moss so thick you could walk across.
Water fowl crying *'kŏl, kŏl, kŏl'*
curve and dip their necks into the water
to feed on round fat catfish playing below.

I.72
In the evening near the edge of a garden pond
white-winged herons jump from a thicket to their nests.
The sound of their flapping wings going *'paṭ paṭ paṭ'*
and their voices crying *'kre, kre'*
are echoed by the resounding call
of ceremonial drums and trumpets
reverberating from the local temple of Viṣṇu.

I.73
A gentle wind passes through a northern temple to Viṣṇu
picking up the fragrance of honey-sweetened prasādam,
along with the purifying scent of holy basil
wafting from the garland that adorns his chest.

From here the wind moves to Śrī Villiputtūr
and brushes past red water lilies
that slip from the hair of temple dancers.

I.74
Throughout the night, a fragrant gale gushes
past the gopuram's fluttering flag,
occasionally rattling the dangling bells.
And at the edge of the golden temple wall
night birds rest on chrysanthemum branches
and begin their chirping to signal the dawn
prompting quarrelling couples
to stop their bickering, and begin making love.

I.75
Drāviḍa girls sit and guard freshly harvested rice,
laid out to dry in sun-filled courtyards.
And meanwhile girls from the village arrive
carrying wicker baskets with lilies for sale,
and as the girls begin to barter,
a spotted temple fawn starts to gobble up the rice
until the girls rush back to scare it away.

I.76
Having travelled a great distance, weary pilgrims enter the town
and are immediately greeted with full-body prostrations.
They are asked about their well-being
and given water to wash their feet
before being led to sit on coconut-fibre mats.

Broad banana leaves are laid out in a row, and the devotees are served a feast of fine rice and
lentils streaming with ghee, along with various curries,
milk and yogurt, all served in little bowls made of woven areca leaves.

And after they rinse their mouths,
they are treated to a foot massage and offered fresh tāmbūlam.
Then the devotees make donations to the temple
in hopes of good fortune
and when they say 'We'll be going now,'
the villagers walk them to the edge of town,
only to return home, sad and lonely.

> Like special guests in their humble homes,
> this is how the people of Śrī Viliputtur
> treat the visiting pilgrims.

VIṢṆUCITTA

I.77
In that town lived a pious bhakta named Viṣṇucitta,
and true to his name, he always kept Viṣṇu in his thoughts,
like an elephant bound by the chains of yoga.
The sacred Viṣṇu mantra was always on his lotus lips
and though unread in the Vedas and Upaniṣads
he understood the great knowledge within
and went beyond all dualities to dwell
in single-minded devotion to his Lord.

I.78
By the grace of god, Viṣṇucitta's good deeds from countless past lives bore fruit in the form of a guru's blessing. He was secretly given a wealth of knowledge through which he understood that he was separate from the physical world, and separate from God. He knew that the connection between himself and the Lord, between part and whole, was eternally existent and without beginning.

Viṣṇucitta thought, 'If one has complete understanding and is absorbed in the ecstasy of the highest yoga, what is the point of arduous study riddled with difficulties? For someone without clear perception Logic is toxic, Sāṁkhya is charming and Mīmāṁsa is harming, philosophy is alchemy and grammar is blasphemy. Even if one attempts to study, there is never enough time, and obstacles always get in the way. All that hard work is futile. But even then, if one learns a little, his arrogance grows huge. If however, one does finish his studies and becomes a true scholar, the material world becomes meaningless and is relinquished, just as one who has grain rejects the husk, or one who has honey abandons the honeycomb. What's the use in reading through texts only to forget them in the end? What's the purpose of study for a recluse like me who's already completely at peace? Some men, who are bound to be reborn, try to defeat rival scholars or receive the praise of kings, but for a man like me, that kind of fame is like a plague, for gain is pain and wealth isn't health!'

In this way, Viṣṇucitta was like the humble brahman Bharata who long ago earned the respect of King Rāhūgaṇa of Sauvīra and taught him the path to salvation.

Viṣṇucitta also understood that the highest goal of man is to serve the many auspicious forms of God, just as the Lord's divine attendants do in Vaikuṇṭham. And so with great love and devotion, Viṣṇucitta lived a humble life in Śrī Villiputtūr, making and offering garlands to his Lord. And moreover. . .

I.79
With his hard earned savings that great yogi served food
to all the groups of visiting Vaiṣṇavas
who came and went along the road that stretches
from the northern Snow Mountains to the southern Sandalwood Hills.

I.80
During the rain-drenched days when the sky was like a bubbling spring
Viṣṇucitta's wife would expertly prepare a fire using dried coconut husks, never allowing the smoke to touch her eyes. She would cook the food
and he would lovingly serve it, all with a coconut-shell ladle–
fine cooked rice soaked in ghee served with peeled red lentils,
four or five well-seasoned curries, crispy black lentil chips,
dried vegetable stir-fries and yogurt.

I.81
In the hot summer, devotees first smeared with sandalwood paste
to ease the heat, are served a refreshing meal–
warm white rice, jaggery-flavored broths, sweet and savoury porridges,
sugarcane juice, fresh coconut juice, sweet cakes, various fruits,
cool scented water, thin buttermilk, and tender green mangoes
that fall to the ground from the heat.

I.82
In the winter, hot meals are served to stave off colds–
fragrant steamed rice with ground black pepper and hot ghee
that burns the hand, various curries sizzling in earthenware dishes,
green vegetables flavoured with mustard powder, pickled fruits,
rice pudding and a little ocean of frothy milk.

I.83
Groups of Vaiṣṇavas from various regions
arrive in Śrī Villiputtūr on Saturdays
for just one chance to bathe in that holy river,
but first they massage and anoint themselves
with items prepared in Viṣṇucitta's home–
mahua flour packed deep into banana flower cups
and oil, filled to the brim in big clay pots.
And after their bath they walk back to his house
with clean washed clothes hanging over their shoulders.

I.84
At midnight, just outside that great bhakta's home
one can hear the sounds of the *Divya Prabandham* being recited,
the sacred stories of Viṣṇu being told, and Viṣṇucitta's own voice saying–
'Forgive me, there are not many curries, nor are they very hot.
We have no cake and the meal is not that great, but please,
please come and eat.'

I.85
In this way, the great Āḻvār Viṣṇucitta
lovingly served all the devoted pilgrims.
And without even knowing it, he easily gave
whoever needed whatever they wanted, and was happy.

[**I.86 – I.89 Āśvāsāntam Verses.** These chapter endings verses, usually four in number, are customarily employed to conclude an *āśvāsam* or chapter. The first three are rather unimganitive invocations of the godhead written in mostly trite Sanskrit compounds. The final colophonic verse which includes historical information about Kṛṣṇadevarāya's Kannaḍa conquests has been translated in Chapter 3.]

CHAPTER II

II.1
You defeated the Daityas
and returned vast riches, robbed from the gods!

O lovely Lord of Vĕṅkaṭa,
the flood of moonlight from Śrī's lotus eyes
makes your face glow with a gentle smile.

II.2
Listen to what's happening in the Pāṇḍya kingdom. . .

MADHURA

II.3
In what city do women spread camphor over their breasts
to remove the smell of oysters from their new pearl necklaces?
In what city do they use the finest sandalwood trees
to build their mansions and sell their scraps to neighbouring kingdoms?
In what city does the breeze carry the musk of Sinhalese elephants
towards the north to excite the female elephants of Spring?
In what city does the king don the finest green emeralds,
only to pass them on to lesser lords?

Only in southern Madhura! Shining in all her glory
amidst the dense surrounding forests.
The towering city gates with doors of gold and pearl,
and the celebrated citadel with its high rampart walls
so impregnable, that even monkeys as tall as mountains
could not enter that city under Sugrīva's command!

II.4
The gilded wall that surrounds the city
is like the golden mountain Meru,
held in Śiva's powerful arms
when he destroyed the Triple City.

II.5
Slowly looking up at the high city walls
the golden crenellations appear in a row
like Lakṣmi's garland of yellow campakas
hanging down from the highest heaven.

II.6
Women play water games in the city moat,

their swollen breasts smeared with perfume and paste
made from conch shell and musk, and sandal and aloe
so fragrant, the smell travels down to the home of the snakes.

Don't you see? This is how Bhogavati the underground river
got her name as the River of Perfume.

II.7
Moss-covered rocks along the banks of the moat
glisten like the so-called garuḍa emeralds,
and as subterranean serpents rise up through the water
to usurp the Earth, the mere thought of Garuḍa
quickly scares them back, back to their watery lair.

II.8
Lily pads and algae coat the moat water
emanating a faint emerald hue,
as if Brahma had squeezed a potent green extract
from alchemical plants when he turned that fort into gold.

II.9
From its solid foundation
the citadel of Madhura rises into the sky
to rival Amarāvati, city of the immortals.

It was as if these two cities were fighters in a wrestling match,
cannons extending like fingers, ready to grab
the waist band of Gaṅga and topple that heavenly city.

II.10
Imagining the gold-plated gate with its lotus bud knobs
as a beautiful young woman in a bright yellow blouse
and the neatly stacked firewood as her incense sticks,
the sun and moon remain entranced, revolving
enamoured around the city entrance.

II.11
The mansions of Madhura rise high above the clouds
and on the topmost floor, when young couples make love,
their torn pearl necklaces and withered flowers
fall to the floor below.

And in the morning as it begins to pour, the attendants think–
    ‘These shiny white pearls must have rained down
    from that stormy ocean of hovering clouds!’

II.12
Giant mansions cast shadows on the river in the sky
and in that watery reflection, Amarāvati and Madhura
glimmer like ships upon the ocean,
their city banners entwined by the wind
like merchant vessels using long wooden poles
to exchange their fine silk textiles.

II.13
When the sun goes down, young women shut their window doors
and trap little stars that enter through mansion skylights.
They pretend to make holes in the floating pearls
and weave them into garlands to hang from their canopy,
but later, when exhausted from love, they open the windows for air
the lovely star necklaces scatter back to the sky.

II.14
High in their mansions in the sky
maidens with hair as beautiful as wild peacock plumes
hear the roar of rain clouds, far far below.
And by singing an ālāp in Rāga Megharañjani
they draw the clouds up to their lofty height
so the thunder can keep beat
for their dancing pet peacock.

II.15
The high-flying flags of Madhura's mansions
flutter in front of the lotus bud cupolas
that top the City of the Unblinking Gods.
And thinking the flag bells are a jingling gold bracelet
women look up and see, the playful eyes of Śrīlakṣmi.

II.16
Compassion, like the gentle old wives of the Seven Sages
quells the nightly squabbles of quarrelling couples.

So as morning approaches, the wives rush to adorn themselves
and when they make up, to make love to their husbands
they make fresh kāṭuka by holding steel plates
out to nearby lightning clouds, they melt civet sticks
with the heat of the coming sun, and braid their hair
with tender red lotuses that open with a touch of the fading dawn moon.

II.17
Tall timber rafters rise into the sky and massage the feet of Viṣṇu
like loving friends who cover the sun with their cīras
and caress the bride-to-be. And as she sweats with anticipation

like a misty fountain, they quietly chatter like warbling pigeons
as they lead her to the groom. The dark-scented smoke
makes a perfect night, for a wedding night inside a Madhura mansion.

II.18
The high noon sun is a deep rich red,
reflecting the glow of red lotus gems
that decorate the surrounding city spires,
as if Brahma the Creator had forgotten to remove
the redness of the sunrise
as the Lord of the Day rose into the sky.

[II.19 See Note II.20]

II.20
The charming flattery of handsome young men
melts the hearts of the flower sellers
who show their modesty
with water-lily glances and jasmine smiles,
floating the men a garland in the air
strung together with an invisible thread.

[II.21-23 See Note II.20]

II.24
As the mahouts scream at an elephant in rut
he flaps his ears and lifts his head
     his trunk to the sky is rising, rising. . .

his back scrapes the portal
his roar breaks the sky, his shackles are flailing
    as he terrorizes the handlers he is chasing and chasing. . .

with liquid at his temples, he swells up with pride
as drums are beat to scare him
but he strikes back, at the frightened drummers
     with the stones he is hurling and hurling. . .

and knowing the terraces are cool and calming
he stands near the gates and swings at the crowd
     his trunk ever reaching, reaching, reaching. . .

Beaten away with bamboo canes
     the elephants start to flee
but hearing the roar from another path
     they stop and turn

and with pride they stride, behind their women
arriving at a new city limit, like Lords of Death
ready to be unleashed upon their enemies.

II.25
In the city's gardens, untamed elephants chained to giant trees
constantly splash water on their mud-caked backs,
germinating seeds in fallen fruits, making themselves appear
like moving mountains, rocking and teeming with life.

II.26
The thoroughbred stallions of Madhura are galloping,
bridled mouths jerking with foaming spittle at the bit.
And with the corner of their eyes they catch a glimpse
of a bow and quiver on the saddle's side.
They shout, 'Arrows! Like the Serpent Lords!
We lost our wings to Śālihotra's wrath.
Though you have your own feathered tips,
come, ride with us now!'

II.27
But then the charging horses think–
'The bow and quiver aren't tied to the saddle,
so when we stop, the sharp-tipped arrows
will pierce the backs of the riders ahead!'
And so seized with worry, they slow their pace,
digging their hooves into the dirt.

II.28
Those mighty steeds leave the Wind behind,
outrunning him with the speed of their burning stride.
And in the morning, when shiny salt cakes
like crystal mirrors are fed to the waking horses
they neigh and let out the Samāna Breath,
turning white salt-rock to black, black from the Wind's disgrace.

II.29
Soldiers need two stirrups to mount their tall stallions
but as the horses gallop and begin to crouch
their riders become scared as their feet graze the ground.
'Which of these two is worse? And what becomes of us?'
think the proud warriors as they feign exhaustion,
humbled twice over by these mighty swift steeds
from Persia, Balkh, Herat and Khotan.

II.30
The alluring young courtesans of Madhura

are masters in the arts of love.

Is there any doubt
    their long black hair falls to their lovely feet?
Is there any doubt
    their mirror-like visage seduces the manliest man?
Is there any doubt
    their slender waists support two cakravāka birds?
Is there any doubt
    their charming glances are like shining scales?
Is there any doubt
    their body is fragrant like a vine of flowers?

II.31
Fair-skinned Nārada, the mischievous sage
instigates fights between men and women.
His white robes, like a heap of camphor, like a mass of menthol
turn the saffron flowers in his hair to yellow.
The fragrant musk and the sweet sound of bees
from his black-stringed vīṇa
leave no respite for Love's reprise.

II.32
'Triśaṅku defiles the sky, so the heavens do not suit us,'
think the Sun, the Moon, the planets,
the stars and constellations
as they fall to earth in sparkling splendour
like heaps of colorful gems, displayed in Madhura's markets.

II.33
The priests of Madhura are mountains made of Vedas,
masters of rites and recitation.
Constantly tending the sacred fires, and always offering burnt oblations
their dexterous hands are hidden in flames,
so when Indra, Kubera and others arrive, with a flowing stream of gifts
the brahmans don't extend their hands, for fear of dousing their inner fire.

II.34
The princes of Madhura force the surrender of enemy kings
with their mighty arms like adamantine maces.
These pure-hearted lords never fight on foot
    except when they spar in their training rooms,
they rush into battle with no need for armour
    except when they incant their magic weapons,
and their powerful arms are always steady
    except when they unite their hands in giving.

II.35
The merchants of Madhura are honest men
their heaps of gold are ever growing.
For each million they make, a flag is raised
and hidden in rain clouds above the market.
Day after day they follow their dharma and make donations,
their generosity flowing to the royal highway
where obelisks rise like well-watered trees.

II.36
The farmers of Madhura are noble servants
who heap their crops into a thousand hills.
    'The furrowed lines of our king's feet
    are there because of us,
    for the row of ploughs that sustains the city
    are borne upon our shoulders!'

II.37
Flowers and vines are plucked and pruned
by innocent girls in the city gardens.
'Enjoy our beauty but let us be!'
plead flowering trees encircled by bees
as if Love, with his army of parrots and cuckoos
had arrived to besiege that city.

II.38
The fragrant Malaya wind
flows down from the Sandalwood Hills
as if Vāmana, Guardian Elephant of the South
was entering Madhura, attracted by the scent of the city's elephants.

And as if desiring even more sweet fragrance,
the wind blows past the musk-filled navels
of black-skinned antelopes, and fearing the grasp of hostile snakes
the wind flies up to mansion cages
to caress the plumes of nestling peacocks,
and as if too shy to cool the bodies
of ladies exhausted from lovemaking
the wind sweeps by their tender foreheads
and wipes their sweat away.

But in order to see all the wonders of Madhura,
the rushing wind slows, to a gentle breeze
like the king atop the mighty Puṣpadanta elephant,
majestically moving, taking in, that glorious city.

THE KING

II.39
Endowed with the six traits of a mighty monarch
and tactfully employing the four modes of governance
you are the wisest ruler, wiser than all your advisors.
Lord of the Hills! Mount Malaya is your playground!
You marked Golden Mountain with your fame
and controlled gathering rain clouds
like a herd of elephants bound in chains.

You crossed the sea like a present-day Rāma
and befriended the Lord of Laṅka
becoming royal friends, like loyal swans
playing in the clear waters of the Copper River.
The genuine blessings of Agastya are with you
and even Lord Indra fears your thousand arrows.

With sacred incantations
you control an army of ghosts
like Śiva himself in royal disguise.
Raising the fish emblem banner in your capital of Madhura
you are the perfect sovereign of the Pāṇḍya empire!

II.40
You never levy high taxes that might burden your people.
You never allow gossip to pierce your heart, or ruin your mood,
  you never even punish the most slanderous offenders.
You never taunt your cowardly enemies
  and always accept praise with humility.
Light of the Lunar Lineage! You never rule without justice,
  your benevolent nature is unsurpassed.

II.41
Our king strolls through the forests of Malaya
  dense with sandal trees wrapped in venomous snakes,
  never fearing traitors who lie lurking at court.
He is a man of few words, never enjoying excessive praise
  nor paying heed to enemy taunts.
With love he became the Lord of Tāmraparṇi
  but never suffered the blackened disgrace of Añjana.
And though his power is ultimate, his judgment final,
  he remains most kind and joyous.

Enemy armies attack like a stormy ocean
and giant waves surge like charging elephants

but our king rises, like a leviathan from the depths
smashing the tide with his sword-like tail.
And as the breakers crash upon the shore,
the splash of foam appears like a shower of pearls
falling from the foreheads of enemy elephants.

II.42
Our king's fame is like a white-winged swan–
one wing soaked in a stream of giving,
the other dry in hidden support.
Most birds remain in the water when their feathers are wet
but the swan is unique, and quickly flies to the sky.

II.43
While the Pāṇḍya king rules, the land is prosperous
protected from each of the six deadly plagues–
Parrots chained with necklaces are kept in pet cages,
while locusts are scorched by our king's splendour.
Rats infest mansions deserted in conquered cities
while droughts are relieved
with the musth that flows from fallen elephants.
Rival kings rattle on our king's anklet,
and flooding is turned into royal giving,
generously flowing from our king's hand.

II.44
Like this the Pāṇḍya Lord spent his time, enjoying the glories of his empire.

THE SUMMER

II.45
The intense summer heat comes suddenly to the land
bursting open the fruits of silk-cotton trees.
Trumpet flower trees are in their full bloom
while mirages on the horizon forecast the coming monsoon.

II.46
The mountain waterfalls have all dried up,
exposing river rocks once covered in moss
now splitting open with giant cracks.
The forest ponds have all dried up
but here and there, in the parched cracked earth
mountain hunters make puddles to catch thirsty doves.

Wildfires rage through forest trees
and hot winds scatter the ash-white leaves
that appear like pigeons to circling hawks.
Tired travellers rest under leafy trees
but as the sun moves down, so too does the shadow
and the travellers roll over to stay in the shade.

The land is bare, parched in every direction
as if Kāla Bhairava himself had laid out to dry
his washed white clothes.
The faces of the Guardian Directions
are burnt and blackened
but appear like white in distant mirages.

II.47
The hot sun dries the mud-caked bodies of elephants, boars and buffaloes
as if Varuṇa was pouring molten metal into fiery crucibles
and cracking open the dry clay moulds.
For even if every creature were to perish in this heat wave
he would have a perfect cast for the next cycle of creation.

II.48
Whirlwinds of spiralling dust whip into the atmosphere
and scatter blades of grass,
as if big empty wells were flying into the sky, cursing the Sun
whose fiery rays, concealed by the darkness of forest smoke,
had stolen the gift of water.

II.49
The summer days grow long–
for the serpent reins of Sūrya's chariot

are starved by the hot West Wind
and slacken from exhaustion in Anūru's hands,
prolonging the sun's journey across the sky.

II.50
Fiery sunrays scorch the world
and burning hot winds throw ashes to the sky
as if fibres from the fruits of silk-cotton trees
were spreading throughout the atmosphere.

II.51
Thirsty travellers move along dry riverbeds,
digging a row of pits as they search for fresh water.
The waterholes fill up and reflect the glittering sun
as if river maidens adorned with shiny pearl necklaces
were rising to ease the heat of longing
caused by separation from their lord the Sea.

II.52
Earlier in the year, torrential rains had served
as a messenger of love between the rivers and the Sea.

Now just a few drooping lotuses remain–
stalks exposed and petals withered,
pistils glimmering in the sun like golden coins,
as if river maidens were extending their hands to the sky
offering a bribe to the God of Clouds.

II.53
A dried out pond filled with lotus stalks, appears like a patch of taro root.
And from this spot, a heron moves, settling on the rim of a water tank.
He swallows the withered waterweeds and smells the fish below
then calmly leans over the water's edge, and waits there perfectly still.

And as he steps down to the tank, to reach the other side
he carefully avoids the hilsa fish as he snacks on tiny snails.
But suddenly, his leg is seized, by a clawing crab below
and as he jerks to free himself, the crab is flung to the air–
he pierces his prey with his sharp thin beak, and swallows it right away.

This is how the herons endure the summer heat
wading knee deep in man-made reservoirs
beneath the shade of thick cork trees.
    During the night, alligators creep onto land
    to feast on insects infesting animal dung.
    And mistaking them for little iguanas, dogs begin to bark,
    forcing the frightened alligators to dive into nearby wells.

In search of water the water-eel plunges
deep into his watery hole.

II.54
Flocks of herons fly to waterless lakes
and quickly gulp down all the flapping fish.
But as the heat grows stronger
the moist mud dries, and begins to crack.
The skewer-like roots of purple lilies
tunnel into the ground in search of water
just like long-beaked herons
who spear and feast on half-dead loach and bony fish.

II.55
Even in such an oppressive season
the summer mornings are cool and pleasant.
The wind sweeps trumpet flowers to the foot of pāṭala trees,
their fragrance doubled by the sweet smell of earth
carried by countless tiny canals
that stream through well-watered flower gardens.

At nearby wells, farmers crank a pulley
raising their water pails and dropping them down the well.
The splash becomes a cymbal crash
adding rhythm, adding swing, to a chorus of happy work songs.

II.56
Delicate round jasmine shrubs
wither away in the excessive noonday heat,
but clustered buds on drooping branches
grow bigger and bigger,
like boiling blisters in the sun.

II.57-59
In preparation for the coming summer heat
water-girls fill their earthen jars with fresh cool water
like farmers gathering seeds for the planting season.
Clay pots conceal their round full breasts
until they bend to fill their jugs
while their eyes are mirrored in the refreshing water
by blue lily petals that perfume the drink.

And at their roadside water stalls
they appear like smiling water-nymphs–
a navel like a whirlpool, hair like moss,
eyes like water-born lotus flowers
and breasts like a pair of cakravāka birds

hidden amongst the foam.

Their thick black braids are woven with white jasmine
as if Yamuna and Gaṅga had intertwined
in search of shelter from the heat.

And as tired travellers stagger to the stalls
humbly calling, 'Dear mother, sister, please give us some water!'
the women pour water into their low cupped hands.
The thirsty young men are slowly quenched
but quickly forget their earlier words
as they start to look up, and then back down
peeking at thin arms, round breasts and glowing faces
whetting their minds as they pretend to keep drinking.

But when the girls start to notice the foolish game
they exchange knowing glances and stop their pouring,
melting the men's hearts with their teasing laughter.
And as the men reveal the secrets of their heart ,
they lovingly offer fresh tāmbūlam
as if they were paying a service tax
to the wealthy God of Love,
for love may be poor in other lands
but never amongst these sultry ladies.

II.60
The earth dries out from the sizzling heat
and hot steam rises as the water evaporates.
The cool night moonlight is absorbed into the ground
as if groups of white nightingales were pouring
a round, flat pancake on a steaming hot griddle.

II.61
All day long, couples escape the heat and play in oval pools
splashing water at each other until they're exhausted.
Their shivering arms are like wilted lotus stems
as they slip their hands around their lovers.

The lazy girls lounge in the warm day sun,
their wet hair still braided with jasmine buds
and their cool breasts still perfumed with paste,
a lingering fragrance like their clinging lovers
who embrace them before their cīras can dry.

Men rest their heads on their women's breasts
and smell the coconut liquor that sweetens their breath.
The couples doze off in the clear open moonlight

and the men squeeze their thighs around their lovers
until the coming of dawn.

II.62
When couples meet in the burning summer
it's as if two rivals were greeting each other,
their hearts ever hidden as they embrace without touching.
And though they have nothing nice to say
they exchange sweet words filled with meaningless pleasantries.

II.63
Fearing the sun's rays, the cool Malaya wind
and a powerless Kāma, flee towards the underworld.
But on their way they are captured by men
who steer them towards the summer Moon
by fanning their exhausted young lovers
with palm-leaf fans woven with uśīra root.

II.64
During Madhura's stifling summer
the sandalwood breeze almost disappears
but with a sleight of hand, the palm-leaf fans
can conjure up that cooling wind.
Isn't the fluttering feather enough
proof to believe this illusion?

II.65
In the sultry summer heat
Love's bow slips from his sweaty hand
and falls to the earth below,
planting his sugarcane bow and flower-tipped arrows
in the fertile soil to grow.

II.66
Well-water retreats to subterranean caverns
away from the sweltering summer sun
so when women knot together an extra long rope
and bend over the well to drop it down,
it's as if their tender breasts, resting on the edge
were like a pair of decoy birds, enticing the water below.

II.67
Flowers flourish in the severe summer heat
and decorate the blackness of women's hair,
buds split braids like the parched cracked earth
while trumpet flowers appear like a rain of honey.
But how can this be? Well just look and you'll see!

Ambrosia and poison are from the same place.

II.68
On a summer afternoon, expert epicureans
season sun-ripened mangoes in sizzling hot oil
and saute fresh cuts of fish taken from dried-out ponds.
And at sunset when they burp from the spice,
they stroll to shady groves where they've buried coconuts in the sand
and ease their tummies with refreshing juice.

II.69
In the summer season, in town after town
vassals are greeted with canopied shelters
dotting the plains like a vine in a furnace.

II.70
All day long women work in the fields,
but in the evening they dress in fine red clothes.
And as they strut to sugarcane mills
with white jasmine buds in their hair,
they appear like a line of marching red ants
carrying away their little white eggs
in fear of the coming monsoon.

THE KING’S CONTEST

II.71-72
That year the summer stretched long
and in holy Vṛṣagiri near the city of Madhura
the Boat Festival to Viṣṇu had finally begun.

With great excitement a brahman arrived from a distant land
and worshipped the Lord with devotion.
And from there he proceeded to Madhura
to see that city's glory, and perform his evening rites
in the waters of the Vaigai River.

II.73
In search of refreshment he went to the home of the royal priest.
And there he was given sandalwood paste to smear all over his body
and flowers to decorate his hair. Then he was offered a humble meal
offered to any unexpected guest–

Extra ripe bananas smelling of camphor
and round fat jackfruits cut into chunks,
along with cucumbers chopped into thick big slices
that looked like blobs of hardened ghee.
Several varieties of mangoes
and clusters of tender purple grapes,
skinless green lentils, and extra sweet, super plump
pomegranate seeds.
And finally some pieces of rasadāḍi banana
known to satisfy and cool.

The brahman washed it all down with sugar-sweetened water
and quickly devoured a special tāmbūlam made with camphor
as he sat and bathed in the bright moonlight.

II.74
And using his travelling bag as a pillow
he laid down on the front terrace with the other brahmans.
And as they all got settled for bed,
one read an ārya verse, another responded with a song
and he passed the time reciting pithy proverbs.

II.75
Smeared with a mixture of deer musk and rose water
the fine perfume alone announced his royal presence.
Bees attracted by the fragrance of flowers
were swatted away by his turban tassels

that swung in the breeze scented with pāṭala blossoms.

His swaying pearl earrings appeared to taunt
the shiny pearl necklace that swung to his ears,
and the moonlight reflected on his red silk sash
where his hand held the hilt of his well-honed sword.
Guards cleared a path in front of him
and a lady carried a box filled with betel
as the king, like a moving Mount Meru
strode into an inner lane, within the inner quarters
to meet a waiting lover.

II.76
On his way he overheard the visiting brahman
recite another wise saying-
‘Just as you should gather provisions for the rainy season
in the eight months before the monsoon,
you should prepare for night during the day,
for old age when still young,
and for the next life, right now, in this life.
While you still can, you should try your very best
to lead a righteous life!’
These words about life's inevitable future pierced the king's soul.

II.77
The king listened to the proverb,
reflected on it in his heart,
understood it's meaning, and stopped.
He was stunned, overwhelmed and petrified
by his self-perpetuated delusions. He froze,
and stood in the middle of the road in utter distress.

II.78
He thought to himself-
‘Oh! What is this glorious empire?
What are these pleasures?
Why these emotions?

This body is nothing but a bubble about to burst.
Even Manu, the primal man who was born at the dawn of time
was ultimately destroyed, trampled by the great God of Death!
I've enjoyed this life without ever considering the path to freedom,
but have I really lived?

II.79
Just as travellers are ferried to the far shore
without them even noticing the movements of the boat, so too

does Time pass, quickly without our realizing it.
And in this trance, life just passes us by.

II.80
Sagara, Nala and Purūravas
Triśaṅku's son Hariścandra,
Purukutsa and Kārtavīrya;
Gaya, Pṛthu and Bhagīratha,
along with Suhotra, Śibi, Bharata and Dilīpa;
the Bhārgava Paraśurāma and Yuvanāśva's son Māndhātṛ;
Śaśibindu, Anaṅga and Ambarīṣa,
Puru's father Yayāti, and Rāma, and Ranti, and Marutta.
Did Time not kill them all?

II.81
The joys of an empire are as fleeting as lightning!
And I can't go through life addicted to sensual enjoyments,
as if I was strolling through some kind of pleasure garden.
From this moment on, I shall seek only spiritual happiness.

II.82
So far I have lived according to dharma, artha and kāma.
But no longer shall I accept this wretched fate, continuously running
up and down the road between heaven and earth.
I must find the God who grants mokṣa, and worship only him!'

II.83-84
The king then thanked the brahman
and ordered his guards to present him
with the purse of gold coins that was safe inside his betel-nut box.
Then he returned to the palace and passed the night alone.

In the morning he held court
and summoned wise scholars versed in various schools.
He said to them, 'Look into each of your texts, and tell me with certainty
which of your gods grants mokṣa.'

II.85
He ordered a bag of specially minted gold coins, bright as bīra blossoms
to be hung in the middle of the assembly hall,
a prize for whoever might win the debate
by proclaiming the ultimate Truth.
The scholars looked on, as the black bag dangled
down like a twisted cobra. . .

II.86
One praised Hara and another praised Hari.
One exalted the Sun while another extolled the Moon.
Others declared the supremacy of Brahma, Gaṇeśa, Uma and Agni
and as the debate raged on. . .

II.87
Back in Śrī Villiputtūr, the humble garland maker Viṣṇucitta
was reciting the sacred mantra *'Om Namo Nārāyaṇāya.'*
And as he was about to place a fragrant tulasi garland on the idol's chest,
Śrī Mannāru Svāmi, the god of Śrī Villiputtūr awoke,
and instructed him in a gentle but serious tone–

II.88
'Viṣṇucitta, you are a wise man! Now set out immediately for Madhura!
Go to the Pāṇḍya king's assembly hall filled with arrogant blind fools
and silence their egotistical blabbering.
Proclaim my greatness and claim the prize!
The king has become disgusted with this world,
use compassion and convince him to become a Vaiṣṇava.'

II.89
And as soon as the Lord finished speaking, Viṣṇucitta began to tremble,
he dropped to the ground and prostrated himself before the Lord.
He arose shedding tears of joy, tingling all over with awe
and thrice he bowed his head in humility, and then, with genuine devotion
he pleaded with Viṣṇu like this–

II.90
'O Lord! I've never read a book or religious text.
I'm totally blind to these things.
I'm a mere temple servant who works in the flower garden.
My hands are rough and callused from digging in the dirt,
breaking clods of rock-hard clay with a pickaxe.

If you send me to the king's court as your champion,
I'll surely be defeated. How could I disgrace you?

II.91
'O Narahari! Order me to sweep the temple floors,
or fetch water for your pūjas, make long flower garlands,
or light the evening lamps.
Command me to bear your beautiful palanquin,
or hoist your victory banner, or hold your fan and umbrella.
But please, please don't ask me to debate!
Aren't there any other actors for your cosmic play?'

II.92
The Lord was radiant as he took Viṣṇucitta's devotion to heart.
He looked over at Śrīdevi's face, and with a smile he said,
'My dear, I will make him win this debate,
watch my miracle unfold!'
Then Viṣṇu turned to Viṣṇucitta and said–

II.93
'O wise sage, is this your choice? Go! Go with confidence!
I will ensure your victory in the king's court.
Your pleas to the contrary are meaningless.
Above all else, remember, I'll be with you!'

II.94
After the Lord spoke, the Āḻvār Viṣṇucitta,
too afraid to respond, readily agreed to go.
And meanwhile, Viṣṇu ordered the temple priest
to make preparations for the saint's journey.

II.95
Following the Lord's command, the temple priest
had the temple manager draw funds from the temple treasury.
The temple officer gave Viṣṇucitta his rickety old palanquin
and obeyed his master's command by bearing the load himself.

II.96
Strong fat horses were borrowed
and weighed down with heavy swaying sacks.
And off to the side, solitary sages approached
carrying in their satchels sweet rice cakes for the king.

II.97
Viṣṇucitta's wife lovingly packed food for the journey–
assorted condiments and spice mixtures, lentil chips made with yogurt,
raw dried vegetables, various lentils and a stack of sweetened rice cakes
tied up with string. Aged rice still in the husk, and rinsed rice
ready to be cooked, along with a tin filled with a seasoned mixture
made with equal parts of cumin-spiced jaggery and tangy tamarind.

Big brass cooking pots and thin-necked flasks filled with fresh cow ghee
were hung from the ends of bullock cart yokes, and special boxes
were filled with all the necessary items needed to perform the daily pūjas.

Both sects of Vaiṣṇavas, well versed in the dos and don'ts of religious life, surrounded the travelling party, and they all set out for Madhura.

[**II.98 – II.101 Āśvāsāntam Verses** These highly Sanskritized chapter-endings verses are in praise of Viṣṇu's various forms. The final colophonic verse which includes historical information about Kṛṣṇadevarāya's conquest of Kŏṇḍavīḍu has been translated in Chapter III.]

CHAPTER III

III.1
Lord of Śrīdevi, Bhūdevi and Nīḷa.
You ripped the life force from the Demon Ox
and bore up the night-stalking Hiraṇyākṣa
upon your giant tusks!

O Lord Vĕṅkaṭa! You transformed Kārttikeya
with your gentle glance of grace.

III.2
Listen to what's happening with Viṣṇucitta. . .

THE DEBATE

III.3
The debate was still going on, and the palace gatekeepers
escorted guests to the assembly hall without even informing the king.
But Viṣṇucitta was different, he had a special glow about him,
his whole being was pervaded with the power of God.

And as he entered the great hall, all the king's counsellors rose in wonder.
They welcomed him and remained standing until he took his seat,
there on a high throne made of precious gems and gold,
that the king had arranged especially for him.

III.4
And after he accepted their hospitalities,
he noticed that the scholars had stopped their clamouring.
'Are we strangers here?' he asked.
'Please, please continue the deliberations.'

III.5-7
But after they spoke just a few petty words,
Viṣṇucitta understood the depth of their intellect.
He chuckled, looked over at the king's gentle countenance and said,
'If you act as an impartial intermediary,
we might be able discuss a few things.'

And with the king's permission,
in the middle of the ensuing debate,
Viṣṇucitta turned and faced the lead debater
and asked 'What was it that you said?'
Then he repeated everything that the scholar had propounded earlier
and calmly pointed out the fault in each of his arguments.

Some could not understand his reasoning, so one by one
he patiently explained the rationale behind each of his critiques.
The assembly became agitated and burst into an uproar,
but he reconciled them all and gained their support.

In this way, Viṣṇucitta challenged the other debaters
and one by one, defeated them all.
Then he turned back to the first scholar
and like a conqueror to the conquered,
compassionately let him go.

Viṣṇucitta had proved his mastery of śruti, smṛti and sūtra
and having established the Truth with just one voice,
he proclaimed his faith to the world!

III.8
'Nature is the seed of the world's origin,' argued the Sāṁkhyans,
but Viṣṇucitta countered them with *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.5,
and when the Advaitins claimed that 'I am God'
he quickly cited *Brahma Sūtra* 4.4.21.

With *Brahma Sūtra* 3.2.37 Viṣṇucitta defeated
the scholars of Pūrva-Mīmāṁsa who deny the existence of God
and believe that ritual alone will lead to heaven.
And to the Vaiśeṣikas who rely on inference to know God,
Viṣṇucitta recited *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.3.

Quoting the Vedic statement *'God is everlasting in all things'*
he challenged the Buddhists who perceive everything as momentary.
And last, with *Brahma Sūtra* 1.2.3 he won over the Cārvākas
who see no difference between God and king.[427]

III.9
In this way, Viṣṇucitta used Dvaipāyana's *Brahma Sūtras*
and the authoritative Vedas to prove beyond any doubt
that God is the everlasting bliss of consciousness.

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[427] The exact citations from the *Brahma Sūtras* and the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* are given below with short explanatory glosses. A more detailed analysis of the philosophical arguments raised by these references is provided in Note III.8.

BS I.1.5 *īkṣater nāśabdam* [consciousness is the origin of the world]
BS IV.4.21 *bhogamātrasāmyaliṅgāc ca* [God and souls are equal only in enjoyment]
BS III.2.37 *phalamata upapatteḥ* [the fruits of action come from God]
BS I.1.3 *śāstrayonitvāt* [scripture is the source of knowledge]
BS I.2.3 *anupapattes tu na śārīraḥ*[individuals do not have the qualities of God]
KU V.13 *nityo' nityānāṁ…* [God is eternal in non-internals]

He was praised by all the scholars and went on to teach
that the God Viṣṇu was different from all other gods,
clearly establishing with irrefutable proofs
the absolute preeminence of Viśiṣṭa Advaita.

III.10
In the beginning there was only One–
the all-pervading Nārāyaṇa.
There was no Brahma, there was no Śiva.
No heaven, nor earth, nor Sun, nor Moon.
No fire, no stars, no water below.
There was nothing at all but Oneness.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* it is told–
'The One thought "It is not right to be one. I will become many."'
So when one became many,
both sentient and non-sentient beings were created.
Nārāyaṇa became the sun within the sun,
and his two lotus eyes become the three, the eight,
the thousand eyes of Śiva, Brahma, Indra, and all the rest.

III.11
The same text describes the miraculous attributes of God,
the unequalled Form beyond forms.
And the *Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* describes God's presence,
which fills all beings both inside and out.
The Aruṇa Section of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
states the same, and explains that every syllable and phrase in the world
is contained within that one pure word *nārāyaṇa*.

III.12
Above all other famous Vedic sayings,
'*apahata-pāpmā divyodeva*' from the *Subāla Upaniṣad*
establishes that there are no other gods,
only the one Nārāyaṇa.

III.13
The *Brahma Sūtras* and *Vedānta Śāstras* explain that the soul, the earth, fire, wind, space, time and death, along with all the sentient and non-sentient realities in the entire universe are the bodies of Viṣṇu. Furthermore, the Vedas declare that all the bodies of the gods are contained in that one body of the endless Nārāyaṇa.

For someone desiring mokṣa, no matter who they are, who else is there to worship but the Lotus-Eyed Nārāyaṇa? From time to time Viṣṇu takes the shape of Brahma, Śiva, Arjuna, Vyāsa, the

Sun, Paraśurāma and others, but these forms are only invoked for the purpose of dharma, artha and kāma- they are not fit for those who seek mokṣa.

Not only that, there is a permanent connection between God and our consciousness. The Upaniṣads clearly establish that He is mother, father, brother and home. He is protector, friend and destiny. Nārāyaṇa alone is everyone's ultimate refuge.

[III.14 – III.65 Khāṇḍikya & Keśidvaja Samvādam. This lengthy subsection recounts the tale of Khāṇḍikya and Keśidvaja, and is likely derived from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. The philosophical debate between the two cousins of the Nemi dynasty revolves around issues of moral governance, proper kingly conduct and the value of spiritual knowledge. Khāṇḍikya represents the ritual-abiding cousin while Keśidvaja represents the knowledge-driven cousin. A battle ensues between the two kings leaving Keśidvaja as the sole sovereign and Khāṇḍikya banished along with his people to the forest.

One day Keśidvaja performs an important *yajña* in search of *mokṣa*, but unfortunately the sacrificial cow gets eaten by a ferocious tiger. Keśidvaja's own brahmans advice him that the only person with the right knowledge to remedy the tainted *yajña* is Khāṇḍikya. As Keśidvaja proceeds to the forest, Khāṇḍikya's ministers warn against the approaching king's designs and advice that it is a king's duty to protect his people from enemies. Khāṇḍikya however, helps his cousin and rectifies the *yajña*. As a gift, Keśidvaja offers Khāṇḍikya a limitless boon, in regard to which the ministers advise the acquisition of land, wealth and power. Khāṇḍikya however, argues for the supremacy of spiritual knowledge and asks Keśidvaja to reveal the path to *mokṣa*.**]**

[III.66 – III.89 Avidya Discourses. The philosophy imparted to Khāṇḍikya by Keśidvaja is a discourse on the blinding powers of *avidya*. Over twenty verses illuminate the perceived differences between the body and the soul, employing discussions on *ātma*, *vāsanas*, *jñāna*, *saṁsāra* and *mokṣa*. Keśidvaja also includes a detailed technical description of the tenents of *yoga*, and the bodily practices of a *yogi*. The discourse continues with a discussion about the ultimate *Brahman* and a long *vacanam* on the *bhāvana-trayam*. In closing, Viṣṇu is praised as the highest god and Khāṇḍikya renounces his kingdom in search of *mokṣa*.]

[III.90 – III.93 Āśvāsāntam Verses. These highly Sanskritized chapter-endings verses are in praise of Viṣṇu's various forms. The final colophonic verse which includes historical information about Kṛṣṇadevarāya's conquest of the Gajapatis at Kŏṇḍapaḷḷi has been translated in Chapter 3.**]**

CHAPTER IV

IV.1
Lord of the Bull Mountain
you lure cows to pasture with your flute songs.

With mighty Garuḍa on your flag
you slew the vainglorious Naraka, son of the Earth
and recovered the earrings of Aditi, mother of the gods!

O Śrīnivāsa! Lakṣmi rests gently
between your broad arms.

IV.2
Listen to what's happening now. . .

VIṢṆUCITTA'S VICTORY

IV.3
Forcefully, Viṣṇucitta split each knot and broke each string
one by one, until one thread was left.
He stood there for a moment, and then, suddenly,
he snapped the last strand, and with a big bang
the black bag of coins fell quickly to the ground.
Celestial drums were beaten, and flowers rained down
as the fanfare of the gods resounded through heaven.

IV.4
In that moment, right then and there,
the king ordered that Viṣṇucitta be honoured with gifts.
Crowds of servants rushed, from treasury to assembly hall
carrying loads of glittering gems, gold jewellery and fine fabrics.
But in their haste, the gifts slipped from their hands,
leaving a trail of treasures piled up to their knees
like a multi-colored garland for the Goddess of the Earth.

IV.5
Viṣṇucitta defeated the other debaters
and won the king over with the truth revealed in the Vedas-
the Truth of Viṣṇu.
He immersed the king in the waters of devotion
and convinced him to take refuge in God
so that he may better serve the world.

IV.6
And when that great scholar had won the contest
all of heaven was filled with praise–

the gods used words of wonder, saints used highest praise
departed souls spoke with reverence, and celestial musicians shouted-
‘He's exposed the pride of those petty-minded scholars!’
and finally the demigods proclaimed-
‘This Age of Darkness has become a Golden Age!’

IV.7-8

Licking their lips in disgust, some stormed out in bare feet
only to go searching for their sandal bearers.
Others rushed passed their palanquins, waiting right before their eyes
and turned back to scream at their carriers.
Some were approached by their servants, who asked about their duties
but the scholars paid no heed and answered 'Yes, OK' to everything.
Many split up and scattered to the palace outskirts
only to stand and wait for their fellow scholars to join them.

Meeting at the crossroads, their eyes still set on the palace
the scholars stood and spoke in secret–
‘What has become of this debate?’ they grumbled.
‘The king is lost, he's partial to that slave!’
‘Yes, yes! It's true!’ clamoured the others.
‘He's distanced himself from discernment!’
‘Who could remain there in his presence!’ they shouted,
and finally left for their homes.

IV.9

Then, for the fame and glory of the king
Viṣṇucitta was asked to ascend the royal elephant.
‘Parade him through the city
and escort him back to his home in Śrī Villiputtūr!’ ordered the king.

And as soon as Viṣṇucitta mounted the great elephant,
he was surrounded–
lords on one side and princes on the other
with elephants and horses all decorated with bells.
As the royal procession made its way down the city lane
the jingling anklets of city courtesans were drowned out
by blaring trumpets and endless praise from minstrels.

IV.10

Like a cloth of double-weave, dyed with vermillion-red and vitriol-blue
the sky suddenly turned to a lightish purple, reflecting his layered wings.
The wind began to blow, fragrant
with the smell of fresh cream from the Milky Ocean
and a loud cry echoed throughout the atmosphere.
Then Viṣṇucitta saw that great King of Birds,
and on his back...

IV.11
The Lotus-Eyed God appeared in his form with four limbs,
arms like the boughs of the Wish-Fulfilling Tree,
strong hands carrying both conch and discus
like a white-winged swan and a spiralling whirlwind of pollen.
His divine lotus feet reddened the centre of Garuḍa's wings
golden-red, like the tips of snake-gourd flowers.
His smooth black body was wrapped in garments of gold
reflecting the play of colors, cast from his mount's wings.
His hanging pearl necklace was shining pure
like the genuine wishes in the hearts of yogis,
and his crocodile earrings fashioned from precious jewels
were like Lakṣmi's ocean playmates
whispering secrets in his ear.

IV.12
All thirty-three million immortal gods
stood in heaven to watch that muni Viṣṇucitta,
but as soon as Lord Viṣṇu came into view,
they quickly closed their open parasols.

IV.13
With wonder, a host of demons and ghosts came to see Lord Viṣṇu
but as soon as they felt the rushing wind from the Snake-Eater's wings
they all fled in fear, flying away like pithless grains
beaten on a threshing floor, scattered by a winnowing fan.

IV.14
The gods rained down an endless shower of safflowers
filled with the buzz of big black bees, harmonizing
and ever rising like the Sāman songs of Vedic praise.

IV.15
When the muni Viṣṇucitta saw the Lotus-Eyed God
suspended in that space between heaven and earth
his body was electrified and he burst into tears.
And using the elephant bells like a cymbal beat
he began his praise to that Greatest of Yogis...

THE TEN DESCENTS

IV.16

Jaya jaya wielder of sword and wheel, of bow and mace
summoned to split the demon race!
Jaya jaya splendour of a thousand suns, and a million moons
lustrous body black and hewn!
Jaya jaya source of the Gaṅga's flow, sprung from lotus feet below
emerging pure with a pistil's glow!
Jaya jaya killer of the demon Keśi! King of Ka and Lord of Īśa!
Jaya jaya Hari, in the line of Śūra
whose eyes are like the autumn.

IV.17

Taking the form of a giant fish, You ripped the Vedas
from the monster Somaka, dreaded demon of the gods!
Breaking through the ocean waves, scattering
white water in your wake, your scaly body glistened
like a row of pure white letters, derived from the sacred mantras
as you returned the hymns to Brahma in the Land of Truth.

IV.18

Murāntaka! You stirred the waters at the End of Time
with your cavernous jaws and mountainous fins
as You dove to seize the Vedic mantras!
Sea monsters thrashed in the stormy waves
and pounded against your massive body
striking the deathly victory drum
heard throughout the universe!

IV.19

Beyond the limits of the world You grew
bigger and bigger, making giant Somaka
look smaller and smaller.
But you're not a carnivore who eats little fish,
the floodwaters of creation rushed into your mouth
as You gently exhaled the Vedas!

IV.20

I worship You as the tortoise Kūrma, for You became a giant mill
with Mandara spinning on your diamond shell
grinding pearls, and gems, and oyster shells
to make a plaster paste, and coat the muddy floating Earth
dissolving in the churning flood.

IV.21
When You transformed into a giant boar,
the waters of dissolution swelled through the heavens
and cracked the Cosmic Egg, returning to Earth
in an arch of water, like the golden nose ring
that adorns Her, the infinite Source of Creation
lying beyond the limits.

IV.22
As the ferocious Man-Lion, You used your hard white claws
to rip open the chest of the evil Hiraṇyakaśipu!
And in his fire-pit heart of pure clear blood,
You saw your own reflection as an attacking enemy lion.
With rage you plunged at the dense thick mane
and gored out the entrails of that Demon Lord!

IV.23
At first your claws were a stark bright white,
but when You split that demon's chest ,
they became redder and redder
and as You dug deeper and deeper, and deeper still
his evil heart colored them a deep dark black.
It's as if Your power was reflecting the Trinity– white, red and black.
What's this illusion, are You lord or lion?

IV.24
The Demon King Bali made the universe his home
and filled it up with darkness and fear
as he ruled from high with a fiery glow.
But You rose through the sky, your black body extending
beyond the constellation called Crocodile,
casting a vast shadow to extinguish that fire.

IV.25
O Paraśurāma, the Battle-Axe Wielder!
The rain of tears from widowed queens sends Your fame
to the arrow-cleaved passage of Krauñca.
Even today when the monsoon comes,
flocks of swans migrate through that mountain pass,
acting on instinct, following the flight of their ancestors.

IV.26
O Rāma! Lord of Rama in the Line of Raghu!
With one swift arrow You easily felled seven sāla trees
as if You were practicing for that fateful day
when You'd cut through the seven organs of Rāvaṇa,
slashed, with one swift swing of your thunderbolt.

IV.27
The barrage of arrows launched from your divine bow,
so dense that it gives shade to your tired steeds,
purifies the skies above Laṅka!
Twang! goes the bowstring with the speed of hurricane winds
retarding Your war chariot driven by Mātali.
Ttsssss! go fire-tipped missiles, extinguished in the bloodbath
flowing from Rāvaṇa's flesh-eating demons.
Tatt! Tatt! go the arrows as they hit armoured warriors,
piercing through their hearts and lodging into stones.
Even Śeṣa, the Lord of Serpents, lets out a sigh,
for his hoods are burdened, bent by the weight of decapitated demons!

IV.28
O Balarāma! Plough-Bearer!
Why did You dig by the banks of the Yamuna?
You tilled and tilled with no self-control, your body pale
from pining, as you searched the Earth and screamed,
'Where are you my Sīta? Risen and sunken, dust to dust!'

IV.29
Hero of the Yadu Clan!
For seven long nights You held up Govardhana
protecting the cowherds and cattle from rain.
Down the mountain the waters streamed
like a thousand clear sheets of moonlight,
reflecting Your image in armoured splendour
as the people sang your protective prayer!

IV.30
O Nārāyaṇa! Young Manmatha used his pentad of arrows
on groups of demon women, but You slew their husbands
with one swift shot! Why did You move so fast?
Ah, yes, your intentions are Known!
You made it impossible for anyone to penetrate
the women's armour of chastity.

IV.31
I worship You Kalki, the Great Master Horse Rider,
making your steed move in all the Five Gaits,
training him to trample the Five Dreadful Sins!
In your hands twin daggers, twirling, deflecting
the volley of arrows from barbarian attacks
that spark off links for a suit of armour.

IV.32
After being praised in this way, Lord Viṣṇu
turned to Viśvakarma, the divine carpenter, and said–
'Look, this ultimate yogi Viṣṇucitta will soon be a pauper.
The Pāṇḍya king presented him with so much wealth
but he wants to donate it all to my temples and worshippers.
What a pity! Go to his village. Build him a fine home
and decorate it with gems.'

IV.33
And Viśvakarma the architect did just that.

Afterwards, the Lotus-Eyed God
blessed Viṣṇucitta
and disappeared out of sight.

And as soon as the citizens of Madhura
began to praise that great ṛṣi,
he immediately set out for Śrī Villiputtūr.

[IV.34 – IV.37 Procession to Śrī Villiputtūr. Three short verses and one extended prose passage (*vacanam*) describe Viṣṇucittas's triumphant return to Śrī Villiputtūr. The poet offers a fancifully detailed description of the courtesans, jugglers, ministrels and townspeople who welcome Viṣṇucitta back to his home.**]**

[IV.38 – IV.75 Yāmunācārya Caritra. This important substory is inserted into the central narrative as an illuminating story told by Viṣṇu to Lakṣmi. The motifs established in Chapter III are repeated again here as Viṣṇucitta's victory has striking parallels with this semi-historical account of the famous tenth century theologian Yāmunācārya (Āḷvandār) who is believed to be the grandson of Nāthamuni.

The story describes how the knowledgeable young scholar Yāmunācārya proceeds to the Pāṇḍya capital and attempts to convert the staunch Śaiva king to Vaiṣṇavism at the behest of the devoted Pāṇḍya queen. A debate, similar to the one described in Chapter III ensues, and Yāmunācārya establishes the supremacy of the Viśiṣṭa Advaita philosophy. The king is so impressed with the brilliant discourse that he marries his younger sister to Yāmunācārya, gives him half the kingdom as dowry and crowns him the heir apparent.**]**

[IV.76 – IV.136 Monsoon Season. These sixty-one verses describe the rainy season in rich poetic detail. Like the description of Summer in Chapter II, Kṛṣṇadevarāya presents a series of vibrant natural descriptions imbued with both simply everyday metaphors and grand mythological references.**]**

[IV.137 – IV.183 Autumn Season. Immediately following the description of the monsoons, Kṛṣṇadevarāya launches into another forty-seven verses about the autumn season. Again, verse after verse of colorfully complex poems describe the season's characteristic flora and fauna.**]**

[IV.184 – IV.203Yāmunācarya & Raṅganātha. After the autumn Yāmunācarya emabarks on a unrelenting campaign of conquest that brings great wealth and joy to his kingdom. The king however questions the spiritual benefit of such worldly pleasure and considers renouncing the throne in a scenario that parallels the Pāṇḍya king of Chapter II, but more importantly the historical king Kṛṣṇadevarāya himself. Ramamiśra, a disciple of Nāthamuni through Pundarikākṣa, tells Yāmunācārya about the ultimate treasure at Śrīraṅgam. The transformative *darśana* of Raṅganātha prompts Yāmunācārya to relinquish his throne and entrust the kingdom to his son.**]**

[IV.204 – IV.285 Rāja-Nīti Poems. As a farewell offering, Yāmunācarya offers a politicial discourse of eighty-two verses on *rāja-nīti* or ethical governance. The poems reflect the political ideologies of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's own administration and revolve around a political system based on trusted officers, intelligence services, mercenaries, military strategem and public works. Several poems have been translted in Chapter 3 and in index of versse is included as Appendix II.**]**

[IV.286 – IV.289 Āśvāsāntam Verses. As usual the chapter ends with three highly formulaic verses in Sanskrit that describe the deeds of Viṣṇu. The final colophonic verse which includes historical information about Kṛṣṇadevarāya's Kaliṅga conquest and the erection of a victory pillar in Pŏṭnūru has been translated in Chapter 3.**]**

CHAPTER V

V.1
You are the bumblebee that plays in the lotus hearts of
Lakṣmi, Nīḷa and Jāmbavati.
Your body reflects the shimmering blackness
of the Yamuna flowing from Mount Kaḷinda.
O Yellow-Eyed Lion roaming the Hills of Śeṣa
Your image divine is formed of myriad bodies!

V.2
Listen to what's happening with Viṣṇucitta. . .

GODA

V.3
One day in a mango grove, in the middle of a thicket
filled with tender leaves and fresh new flowers
a couple made a bed of love. And all was well.

She was above him, breathing hard
but tired easily and laid back down,
the sweat making mango leaves stick to her back
as if Love was announcing his victory.

V.4
There, near a wide garden path
beyond a clearing decorated with muggulu
that sparkled like emeralds in the shade of green trees,
next to a pond filled with white water lilies
by the edge of a holy tulasi grove–
He saw a baby girl, the Auspicious One,
her little feet, and hands and lips, shining like tiny rubies.

V.5
Astonished, he slowly approached the baby girl
and examined her delicate body,
glowing with every mark of beauty.
And as he gazed for a while upon her divine radiance,
he suddenly noticed that she never blinked!

Viṣṇucitta rejoiced–
'O Mukunda!' he thought to himself,
'You yourself have blessed this childless man
with a beautiful baby daughter.'

V.6
He gently picked her up and brought her home
to his pious wife, who swelled with happiness
at becoming a mother.
She lovingly fed her with breast milk
and tenderly raised her with joy, and gradually
gradually, Goda grew up.

GODA'S BEAUTY

V.7
As her beauty matured
she watched the world with half-open eyes.
She grew quiet, reserved, her eyebrows darkened
and she frowned at playing with childish dolls.

The palms of her hands and the soles of her feet
turned beautifully pink, and her hair grew long and curly.
Her waist became thin and her breasts grew full,
pushing away her childhood.

And though the others didn't notice these changes,
she grew aware of her body.
And in this way, day by day, her childhood slipped away.

V.8
Her body had a golden glow,
her lips were a bright bright red
and her face was clear as the moon,
but she wasn't known by those colors,
she wasn't called by those names.

Her dark and lustrous hair, thick and heavy
surpassed the beauty of big black bees
and She was called Śyāma, the Dark One,
a radiant woman, beautiful and young.
Could it be any other way?
For isn't there a saying– 'Beauty lies in the hair.'

V.9
Goda's hair of round black curls
was like an arsenal of iron rings,
used by Love in his duel with Kṛṣṇa,
who fought with a single discus.

V.10
Goda's brow outshined the mark of married women–
thick black curls against a fair white forehead
adorned with a tilaka made of powdered camphor,
as if Lotus-Born Brahma had penned a line
of round black letters across her brow.

V.11
When applying mascara to her sword-like lashes
her friends raised up her beautiful face
and in that moment, Goda happened to glance
the clear crescent moon of Vināyaka's night.

And now the world is left to think–
    'The Moon is a thief! He's stolen
    the lustre of her radiant face.'

V.12
Jealous of Goda's beautiful eyes,
a spiteful deer provoked the Moon–
    'With my perfume, and your brilliance
    we can compete with her fragrant brow.'

But in Śyāma's defense, the deer was killed
to make a bŏṭṭu of blood, or was it to harvest
fresh raw musk to scent her beautiful forehead?

V.13
Her irises move, closer and closer to the corners of her eye
    and then dart back out of innocence,
like Kāma's quivering lotus arrow as he stands teeth clenched
    with his bow drawn taut, ready to strike his target!

V.14
Drunk with the rum of budding youth
her kāṭuka-colored eyes are trembling,
flashing behind her long black lashes
as if Brahma, the God of Four Faces,
worrying her eyes might fall into her ears
had locked them up in iron fetters.

V.15
The corners of her eyes were red and lovely, her ears were like the letter *śrī,*
and affection could be seen across her face, that was glowing like the Moon.
But as Goda tossed her ball around, an earring fell to the ground
and when she stopped to pick it up, she leaned her head
towards her shoulder to hide her naked ear.

V.16
Her nose is fragrant like a campaka flower
but bees don't swarm there to drink, they gather
near her open mouth, as she begins to speak–
    But why? Could it be her scented breath?
    Ah! For her teeth are white as jasmine
    and the bees are enticed by their own reflection.

V.17
At her birth, the Lotus-Born Brahma
gave her a neck that only resembled a conch,
but as the she matured into a women
and daubed herself with sandalwood essence
her neck became a real conch shell.

V.18
O Lotus Petal Eyes!
The three lines across your neck voice your musical skills
as you span the three octaves– low, middle and high!

V.19
Her arms were soft and slender
as if she'd stolen every beauty from every lotus stalk.
And from the broken roots, she gathered fibrous threads
to string along her body, through the journey of her life.

V.20
Bands of diamonds adorn her arms, reflecting rays of light
that weave themselves like silver threads
through a fine pearl necklace
and a garland made of rainbow buds.

And there, above her breasts and below her neck
in that very little space there is a radiant beauty,
like Mind-Born Kāma's wedding gift to Rati,
a golden bāsikam with hanging tassels.

V.21
She matured slowly, and day by day, her breasts filled out.
Innocently she tried to hide them, pushing them down with her shawl
but her budding womanhood could not be stopped.

As she tried to flatten her chest, her breasts were pressed to her sides
but slowly they rose and grew in beauty,
pushing aside her fading youth.

V.22
Like cakravāka birds who meet after parting
her tender young breasts came together
and slowly, slowly filled her entire chest.
Her soft dark nipples, the smallest remainder
of the black curse given by Rāma.

V.23
Somehow, someway
the two strands of her necklace
fall as one between her breasts
like people who approach their grand old elders
to hear the straightforward truth.

V.24
When Manmatha draws his unsheathed sword
and hurls it like the wind at lovesick women
the blade cuts the folds
of his cloth-covered scabbard
like the fine black line that adorns her waist.

V.25
The dark line of hair rising up from her waist
appears like a snake from her belly button,
slithering up to her full round breasts
to drink the fragrant breath
of She Who Walks Like a Swan.

V.26
When Goda stands tall, the world can't distinguish
between her vine-like waist and her slender arms
except by seeing her golden belt, her arm-bands of gems,
and the fine line of hair that runs down her middle.

V.27
The three folds of skin above her waist
are joined together by a golden belt
as if Manmatha himself had soldered them all
with a thin tiny strip of metal.

V.28
Figuring that her heavy hips might break her fragile waist
Brahma bound her body together,
tying it with a knot and creating a navel
for the One Whose Breasts are Twin Koka Birds.

V.29
From among the many sand dunes that stretch along river beds,
one was scooped up to adorn the landscape of her body.
And in order to spot the sandbank left behind,
Lord Brahma had swans take steps in the sand.

V.30
The plantain tree is a thief, and there lies all the evidence–
a smooth layered trunk hides the beauty of her thighs
and tender flowers steal the redness of her feet,
while crowbar-like pistils pry at her ruby-like toenails.

V.31
Royal servants carry vases and umbrellas, softening the sides of their hands
like the smooth wide thighs of the Goddess with Lotus Eyes.
For no one can escape their duties, no matter who they are
not even Viṣṇu who holds the wealth of the world.

V.32
Her emerald anklets reflect a green glow
up to her lovely dark calves, making them look
like ears of corn, fodder for the Love God's family of parrots.

V.33
Hoping to be compared to her smooth soft calves, ears of corn
skillfully hide their thorns inside their husks,
but as the day gradually passes, their prickly thorns come out
and the stalks bend their heads in shame.

V.34
When Goda daubed her toes with water mixed with lac
her red feet smiled with shining white toenails, and thought–
    'O how innocent she is! Why would she add yet another color
    to her pink lotus feet that already color the world?'

V.35
The playful movements of her tortoise-shell ankles
surpass the elephant's majestic stride!
    Isn't that why a battle still rages
    between the turtle and the tusker?

V.36
Fresh turmeric pales before the color of her body
and shamefully darkens with time–
that's why it shares a name with the night, the darkness,
the black, pitch black and midnight.

GODA'S LOVE FOR THE LORD

V.37

The Moon Faced One was once the Earth Goddess
and due to her friendship with the snake maidens,
Marāḷi, Ekāvaḷi, Hariṇi, Manojña and Sragviṇi
were all reborn as her companions, daughters
in the houses of her devout Vaiṣṇava neighbours.

The girls passed the time, acting out the stories
of Viṣṇu's forms, playing with dolls
reenacting the marriage of Lakṣmi and Nārāyaṇa
and singing wedding songs that described the Lord's virtues.

And listening to these songs, over and over again
Goda fell into a trance- memories
of her past life came back to her
and she longed to be reunited with her beloved.

V.38
Even though the Lord of Wealth had given her father plenty of riches,
Viṣṇucitta still tended his flowerbeds, and devotedly served his lord.
He passed the time reading the Vedas and Vaiṣṇava *purāṇas*,
reciting them along with their commentaries
as he humbly prepared garlands of fragrant red lilies.
Goda would comb her hair and wrap her curls
into a bun that leaned to one side
like a bull's hump, or a peacock's tail,
making a shield for the God of Love.
And below her hair, she would put on a garland
and spend a few minutes just gazing into a pond,
seeing her reflection and satisfying her desire
before turning away
and returning the worn garland to her flower basket.

V.39
After taking a bath, she would rub her body with turmeric,
put on a thin cīra and daub fresh kuṁkum around her breasts.
She would decorate her brow with a bŏṭṭu made of camphor
and ornament her hair with her father's fresh flowers.
And with longing, she kept the garland on her heart
for just a little while.

But one day, as she saw her friends approaching
she shouted. . .

V.40
‘O Friends! Those songs you've sung of Viṣṇu's deeds
I don't think they're fair. All the women
who truly loved him, were left without a care.

V.41
That Viṣṇu! Instead of becoming a god, a sage, or a king
and stirring the hearts of women,
it would've been better if he stayed, just as he was, ages ago
a fish, a turtle, a pig, or a lion!

V.42
And in all those animal forms, he was never a female, was he?
And even if he had been, an animal can't experience
the same intense longing that a human endures.
Don't you realize I know how it feels?

V.43
It's as if he was lying when he said “To me, all creatures are equal.”
For women can ease the pains of love
with conversation and songs, and games and stories,
but the poor animals, who have no voice,
must suffer all the more.

V.44
In ages past, that man came to earth
because of the women who loved him.
Their tear-filled eyes gave rise to his aquatic births,
their hair standing on end became the stiff hairs of a pig,
and their heated passion turned into a ferocious lion.
All his descents were but cunning means
to hide his real intentions.

V.45
Born as a god, a sage, a ruler of men
he mercilessly tormented all who loved him.
Tell him about it, but he won't listen!
Now let me explain
the meaning of those songs–

V.46
‘In the beginning, he became Upendra
and dealt a death blow to Bhṛgu's wife.
Then the old sage cursed him to suffer,
separated apart from his wife.

But Viṣṇu justified it, thinking to himself,
“This forced separation is a divine act!”
He became a celibate, abandoned Lakṣmi
and filled her heart with sorrow.

V.47
The three kinds of kings, seven times in a row
were destroyed by his powerful arms.
His fame became a lute, plucked with a hatchet,
drawn from the fire of a raging sun.
And when the most perfect Goddess of the Earth
was filled with that melody of love, he pushed her away,
forcing her to suffer as Kāśyapa's child.

V.48
She melted when she heard about that handsome Killer
and tender love rose as if she was struck by a lotus.
But when the Lady of the Lotus revealed her affections,
he rejected her, he abandoned her, he left her for dead.
Now consider and judge the actions of Rāma!

V.49
Rāvaṇa's sister changed into a beautiful maiden
and approached that Rāma with genuine love,
but instead of handling her without a fight,
he had her mutilated for all to see.
Without any thought of Sīta, he got into a meaningless war
and she suffered all the pain of abandonment and longing.

V.50
Imitating his brother's lion-like ferocity,
Lakṣmaṇa sliced Śūrpaṇakha's nose to the bone!
The blood, fast flowing, fell to her trembling lips
and she cried out louder than monsoon thunder
while holding on tight to a sandalwood tree.
Her hands grabbed the trunk like a coiled black cobra
as Lakṣmaṇa's arm, like an outstretched white branch
held fast his dagger like a dangling vine.

V.51
If he'd said, “Get out! I don't want your love!”
she would've left, but instead he played with her heart.
It's not her fault she was born a demon!
She loved him, and came to him alone,
a hard thing for a woman to do.
Did he really have to dishonour her?

V.52
Even yogis longed for him,
wishing to be women just to touch him.
And though he could've transformed them all
with his dusty lotus feet, he made them wait for another life,
causing them to be reborn as innocent girls.

But even then, he wouldn't allow their souls to join him!
Under the false pretense of Akrūra's urging,
he quickly rushed to Bhojapura and abandoned them again.

V.53
Ayomukhi and Śūrpaṇakha were genuinely love-struck
but he disfigured them both!
If he claimed their deformities as reason for rejection,
then what about Balarāma who eagerly married Revati-
taller than him, like a giant palm tree, and much much older too?
Or Ugrasena's dwarfish maid, who Kṛṣṇa saved and later loved?

V.54
In Vṛndāvana he was surrounded by all the village girls,
but he only loved one of them, he rejected the others
for Radha was Kṛṣṇa's sole lover.'

GODA AND HER FRIENDS

V.55
Over and over again, memories rushed back to her, and her friends could see that she truly loved that Killer of Kaiṭabha. Under the guise of taunting insults, her words revealed her inner heart. Her modesty, her submissiveness and her virgin love were bursting out, and her body took on the color of molten gold.

But day after day, she was hurt by their laughing, and little by little she grew thinner and thinner. They teased her and said, 'It's harmful to deal with your troubles and fears by revealing the secrets of your heart.' And joking with her they said–

V.56
'No matter who they are, all husbands are alike.
Forget about him. Don't worry about these little things.
When they're far away you're hurt, and when they're with you
you're submissive, praising them as if they were Indra or Candra!
Don't you understand? We end up being your messenger girls.'

V.57
But as soon as they spoke, she had to control her anger.
She smiled a bit, and then bit her lip.
She continued to play with her friends, tossing the ball

here and there, her sidelong glances making sure
that no one was around. And then she said-

V.58
'Leave him out of this! It's not your job to make up lies!
There's less harm in this kind of talk if you pretend to be singing,
so go ahead, continue with your pleasant songs.
Remember, a man who asks for rice pudding needn't be poor.'

V.59
And her friends responded–
'You're right! We'll keep quiet.
But soon enough, maybe even right now,
perhaps later, or maybe tomorrow
you'll tell us about his beauty
you'll tell us about his cruelty.
O friend, who are you trying to fool?
It's clear you're filled with thoughts of him.

V.60
O friend! Insulting women with all those old stories
reveals that you're sick of love.
This meaningless anger reveals you.
That blank inward smile reveals you.
Your rough, choked voice reveals you.
And the long sleepless nights reveal you too.
When you turn on your side, and start to cry all alone
your whimpering sigh reveals you.
And when you hide your face, to flick away tears
the extinguished night lamp reveals you too.'

V.61
'I know something amazing that the rest of you don't!' said Hariṇi.
'Before she stepped into the bathing pond
Goda took off her necklace and hung it on my neck.
But I wasn't thinking, I dove in with her
and the pearls crumbled to powder from the heat.
She was angry as she asked for them back
and I finally understood her pain just a little.'

V.62
Then Marāḷi said, 'Listen to this Hariṇi!
One day she asked me to put a bŏṭṭu on her,
and because we're friends I did.
But as I applied it, the musk started to sizzle
making a sound like a slap on the face.
Her heavy breathing totally dried out the bŏṭṭu

and she picked at it with her nails and moped,
picking up the countless flakes, over and over, and over again.'

V.63
And then Sragviṇi said, 'Sisters!
Once I pushed her too hard on her swing and the vine rope broke.
I thought she fell from the weight of her breasts
but when I picked her up, she felt like a doll made of cork,
and her breasts were like bouquets of flowers
withering away in the noonday sun.'

V.64
And now that her condition was clear to everyone, she pretended
not to be interested and responded like this–

V.65
'Sisters! You're determined to speak to me in this way,
but your clever comments don't comfort me, or ease my pain.
Tell me, why do you have such feelings?'

V.66
So after teasing their dear friend, they finally got her to admit to her pain. Like hot coals roasting in a fire pit, the pains of separation burned inside her. And though Goda wanted to stay there, she couldn't bear it anymore– she slipped out into the night, repeating each and every word, back again to herself, and thought. . .

V.67
'Your alligator-earring hangs down to your left shoulder,
blue and soft like a newly blossomed lotus.
Your beautiful young face remains calm like a pillar
as you raise your margosa-leaf eyebrows, just a little.
Your red lower lip is like a full-blown scarlet mallow,
curved like the crescent moon, showering a rain of vermillion.
Your two bright eyes move like a single glance towards your ears
outshining the brilliance of your sparkling earrings.
You excite the love of innocent women, in all the seven worlds,
moving your fingers across the bamboo flute
as the seven holes flow with songs of nectar.

V.68
In the midnight hours, gopis steal away,
leaving their husbands and in-laws behind,
gathering around Kṛṣṇa like a herd of antelopes.
And there they suffer at the hands of his flute
filled with sounds of sweetness.
O Radha! Is it fair that you, and you alone
receive and enjoy his pleasures?

V.69
Once the God with Lotus Like Eyes took a girl under his arm
and led her into an arbour near the banks of the Yamuna.
The other girls feigning to search for their friend
followed the path of footprints left in the sand. . .
    and what did they see?
Well a woman can keep some dignity, can't she?

V.70
O Yamuna, you may be the Sun's daughter,
but you'll always be Death's little sister!
For even in their dreams, you act like a mistress,
using sweet words to tempt chaste girls
into leaving their homes for your sandy shores,
shores where they seek union with the Lord's divine body.
    But afterwards these girls lie sprawled on your banks
    writhing in flames of separation.'

V.71
All alone, Goda was imagining these things to herself until she heard the chatter of her eavesdropping friends, revealed by their giggling faces, overflowing with moonlight. They shouted, 'Dear friend! What's all this? We know what's in your heart! In the beginning, wasn't it you that said "Stop talking about him?".'

She knew they were right and she bashfully lowered her head. Her face was totally pale and she tried to hide a little smile, but she couldn't. And so she joined them like this–

V.72
'O friends, beautiful as flowers,
what would it have been like
if we lived in his day?'
They turned to her and said,
'O dear, how do you think we got here
if we hadn't lived then?'
Goda was astonished, she said–

V.73
'Friends! You all speak like wise seers
with knowledge of past, present and future.
If you know something in your hearts, then tell me now!
Who was I back then?'
And then they replied–

V.74
'Wasn't it you that became jealous when you saw Rukmiṇi
wearing a flower from the Tree of Heaven?

Envious, spiteful, and making a fuss,
a single flower just wasn't enough!
A tiny task turned epic endeavour
when you made him bring you the entire tree!
O Goda, aren't you that same Satyabhāma?'

V.75

Immediately Goda remembered everything! Like various objects inside a dark house, instantly illuminated when a candle is lit, all coming into view in a single moment. All her past lives came back to her, and she took pleasure in remembering each and every joyous life that she spent together with the One Who is Eternal.

V.76

Tears from her long eyes mixed with black kāṭuka
streamed down her face towards her ears
and joined the darkness of her vine-like hair.
Her limbs became weak, her body shook
like a cardamom creeper in full bloom
and she fainted. . .
'Oh no!' screamed her friends
as they rushed to her with love and worry in their hearts.

V.77

'We filled her heart with memories of her past lives
and on top of that, we teased her by saying
she makes mountains out of molehills!
O the pain we've caused,
describing the deeds of our lotus-eyed friend!'
Then they dipped a palm-leaf fan in a little pot of water,
fanned her with a soft breeze and tried to revive her
with cool tiny droplets of water.

V.78

As she began to regain consciousness, she opened her eyes
but as soon as Goda remembered Mukunda's lotus feet
she closed them again and began to cry.
The tears forced her eyelids to open and she saw her friends. . .

V.79

'Who are you people?' she asked.
'O Śṛṅgāriṇi!' they responded,
'We are the snake maidens, forever close to the Earth!'
Goda embraced her beautiful friends and said with sadness–

V.80

'Once I was Kṛṣṇa's beloved
but now I've been reborn in this Kali Yuga

only to suffer the pains of separation.
Why do I need this body?
Before my father gives me away to some other man
I'll kill myself with my yogic powers
and reach my Lord's lotus feet!

V.81
Living in constant fear, separated from her husband
what kind of woman wouldn't want to leave her body?
That's the only true love!
Those who don't feel it are pretenders.'

V.82
Then her friends said–
'Calm down. Where's that noble Yadu gone?
Listen, he's there in Śrīraṅgam.
If you want to make him your husband
then serve and worship him right here as Mannāru Svāmi.

V.83
'Don't fear,' they assured her, and Goda was consoled.
But after that, moment by moment, she wavered
between the brightening comfort offered by her friends
and the total darkness of her own suffering–
like the necklace that hung over her body, above her weak heart,
fashioned with alternating sapphires and pearls.

V.84
She Who Has a Face Like the Moon
lay restless, nigh after night, waxing and waning
as Love lurked ready to pounce
    in the blink of an eye, at any moment
    like a sharp-quilled porcupine hiding in her house.

V.85
The Warrior with a Spring Leaf Dagger
gave orders to his gunman the Early Morning,
and day after day Goda fell apart
like a fortified citadel under fire.
    Soft morning sunrays lit the cannons
    prying open petals and pistils
    as cannon fire burst from iron stalk barrels
    like a frenzy of escaping bumble bees.

V.86
Goda spent the afternoons
in the cool waters of the bathhouse

sprayed with drops from water pumps
fixed under a bright red awning
    like a conjurer dressed in crimson robes
    muttering spells with his magic beads.

V.87
Dusk appeared to her in a delirious dream
like a female monkey at twilight, stoking the fires of separation–
    The Lover of Lotuses colored her face copper-red
    and her teeth were shining like jasmine buds.
    Her arms were red lotuses covered in pollen
    and her eyes were twinkling like honey-colored stars.
And as the monkey jumped to trees in the sky,
Goda awoke, crying, imagining fledgling cakravāka birds.

V.88
So in this way, everyday, the pain of the Goddess with Lotus Eyes was comforted by thoughts of the Lotus-Eyed God. She loved that Lover of Rādha, and tried once again, to win his heart.

GODA'S DEVOTION

V.89
Everyday before dawn
the One with a Lotus Face awoke in silence.
She took a secret path to her father's garden pool
led by her friends, who sang the Southern Vedas
as they carried the things needed for her bath–
turmeric and gooseberries in golden bowls,
a thin petticoat to bathe in, and fresh clean clothes to dry her.

After her bath, she quickly tied her hair into a bun
while little by little her friends patted her dry.
They covered her body in a fine layer of turmeric
that matched the glow of the rising sun.
And so she prepared to perform the morning prayers,
all according to ancient tradition.

V.90
Goda's teeth were white like jasmine
and she decorated her brow with a bŏṭṭu of earth,
perfectly shaped like a pumpkin seed.
The ochre red sari draped around her hips
was like vermillion smeared across an elephant's forehead.
And in the cool evenings, her civet perfume
offered hospitality to the bees, as it mixed
with the fragrance of her braided wet hair.

V.91
Carrying bunches of big ripe bananas
and garlands made of red water lilies,
Goda's friends went to the temple
and convinced the priest to allow them some privacy.
Then Goda entered, bowed
and drew multicolored muggulu at the foot of the altar.

V.92
She lit the tall lamp stands filled with brown cow ghee
and made a heartfelt offering of sandalwood incense,
clusters of bananas and sugar mixed with butter.
And as she recited the sacred Viṣṇu mantra,
she laid her lily garland across his chest.

V.93
With firm and undivided devotion, she offered
a fine tāmbūlam of ground areca nut
mixed together with bits of dried ginger
and big chunks of camphor.

V.94
Goda and her friends walked outside
and circumambulated the inner sanctum
with lowered heads, consecrated
by holy water from the Lord's blessed sandals.
Then Goda turned homeward
wearing a garland graced by god.

V.95
And as she continued like this, day after day, performing pūjas to Viṣṇu
the pains of her separation were eased, and she grew stronger.
She went on praising that Lord of the Yadus,
passing the Spring by singing songs in Tamil.

[V.96 – V.144 Spring Season. In adherence to the literary stipulations of the *kāvya* form, Kṛṣṇadevarāya continues with a seasonal description of the spring or *vasanta-ṛtu*. As is in other similar sections, beautiful extended metaphors are used relate the wonder and natural specificity of the spring season. The section also functions as a general metaphor for Goda's blossoming love for god.**]**

[V.145 – V.157 Viraha Bhakti Poems. These beautiful poems directly relate the spring season to the *viraha* or longing that Goda has for god. This section is imbued with a sense of devotionalism that resonantes powerfully with Āṇṭāḷ's own *Tirrupāvai* and *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi*. The section ends with a fascinating vacanam (translated in Chapter II) in which Viṣṇucitta

complains to god about Goda's strange but devoted behavior, to which the god simply replies with a story.**]**

[V.158 – V.161 Āśvāsāntam Verses. The chapter ends with three standardized verses about Viṣṇu in classical Sanskrit form. The final colophonic verse which includes historical information about Kṛṣṇadevarāya's defeat of the *yavanas* at Kĕmbāvi has been translated in Chapter 3.**]**

CHAPTER VI

VI.1
You are the Sun that rises above the Serpentine Hill!
The honey that gushes from your lotus-feet
becomes the holy River Gaṅga.
Son of Vikuṇṭha! Maker of Fortunes!
Your eyes are filled with tears of compassion,
sending blessings of kindness to all your devotees.

VI.2
Listen to what happens next in the story. . .

[VI.3 – VI.65 Māladāsari Katha. Lord Viṣṇu relates thes story of Māladāsari, a pious low-caste devotee who sings and performs daily *pūjas* for god. One day the *bhakta* takes a wrong turn and finds himself in a desserted area under an ominous looking banyan tree. Here he is captured by a Brahman ghost who wants to eat him. After a short struggle Māladāsari relents and explains that *deha-dānam* is indeed a righteous duty. He further convinces the ghost that he must complete one last *pūja* before returning to the banyan tree to be eaten. And true to his word, Māladāsari returns the next day to offer up his body. The Brahman ghost is overwhelmed by the *bhakta's* honesty and compassion and seeks the fruits of Māladāsari's *pūjas* as a means to attain his own salvation.]

[VI.66 – VI.89 Soma Śarma Katha. Although Māladāsari cannot share his earned *punya*, he inquires about the ghost's past. Once there was a brahman named Soma Śarma. He was a cheap, petty-minded, money-seeking specialist who performed bogus rituals just to get by. One day he and his friends were attacked by low-caste bandits. In his attempt to flee Soma Śarma is killed only to return as a *brahma-rākṣasa*. After hearing the story Māladāsari agrees to help and by god's grace the ghost is transformed into a living Soma Śarma. The reformed brahman praises the low-caste Māladāsari and worships him as a true *bhakta*. **]**

ŚRĪRAṄGAM

VI.91
Crossing the Kāveri
was like reaching Vaikuṇṭham
beside the banks of the River Viraja.

The ring of orchards surrounding Śrīraṅgam
was like the Nandana Pleasure Garden,
and the seven-petalled campaka flowers
seemed like the Golden Gates of Heaven,
dispelling sins, like a swarm of intoxicated bees.

Seeing the spires reach up to the sky
glowing like crenellated lamps of fire,
Viṣṇucitta truly saw heaven on earth.

VI.92
The breeze spread over the Daughter of Kavera,
carrying the melody of swan songs, accompanied
by the tambūra-like drone of carpenter bees.
The refreshing river air, perfumed by red water lilies
that decorate the braids of Co<u>l</u>a women, eased the weary Viṣṇucitta.

VI.93
He bathed in the calm waters of the Kāveri,
enduring the cold as he recited prayers of forgiveness.
Viṣṇucitta completed the noon rites
and along with Goda,
who had bathed and decorated herself too,
he proceeded on to Śrīraṅgam, surrounded
by a congregation of Vaiṣṇava worshippers.

VI.94
Worried that the colorful beams of light from jewel-encrusted eaves
    might stain their pure white clothes,
    they quickly walked in search of alms.
When citizens gave them a handful of gems, or an ārati of rubies
    instead of the requested rice or grains,
    they left the gifts at the doorway.
When they heard the jingling anklets of women or elephants
    coming towards them in the street,
    they quietly moved out of the way.
When they smelled the aroma of food, or the fragrance of flowers-
    offerings prepared in every household,
    they tightly held their breath.
And when they heard both singing and dancing

and the chatter of parrots and mynas,
they half listened because the songs were in praise of Viṣṇu.
In this way, the group of devotees, like an island of white
entered the temple of Śrīraṅgam.

VI.95
A cool breeze, wet with dew from the Lotus Pond called Moon,
passed through the vast gopurams and revitalized the pilgrims.
The bells of the central tower chimed to greet them,
like hushed voices asking, 'Are you well?'

Viṣṇucitta passed through the six outer enclosures of the temple,
adorned with a host of whimsical demigods
and entered the inner sanctum,
guarded by the menacing sentry Caṇḍu.

VI.96
Draped in a colorful robe, he stood on a jewelled dais
holding a staff in his hand, his finger sparkling
with the signet ring of the God with White Lotus Eyes.
On either side of him stood a hundred motionless elephants,
their heads slightly lowered in reverence.
And Viṣṇucitta bowed down with devotion
as he gazed upon Viśvaksena, the Lord of Sūtravati.

VI.97
Like a towering mountain of gold,
impervious to Purandara's thunderbolt,
his brilliant wings spread a radiant warmth in every direction.
Viṣṇucitta turned and paid homage to
the kneeling Son of Vinata, the mighty Garuḍa
whose Body is The Vedas.

VI.98
Garuḍa allowed him to pass, and Viṣṇucita entered the sanctum. He saw the God with Four Arms, dark as a rain cloud, with eyes like two lotuses, each with a hundred petals. And between those four arms was spread an arc of flowers, lying across his clothes made of golden silk. In all his beauty He appeared like a perfect reflection of Love. And to His side was Parāṅkuśa, and all the other liberated souls, absorbed in God's presence. Viṣṇucitta, along with everyone else, was awestruck.

The wide open hall supported by jewel-studded columns was filled with the black smoke of burning incense. A multicolored silk canopy hung down from the pillar tops, glowing like peaks of golden heaps. And right in the middle, a beam of moonlight shined down on a great raised altar adorned with flower garlands and a yak tail brush, light and white like pearls. The vast dais was glowing with golden lotuses and covered in a swarm of buzzing bees.

The hall's dark dimness was dispelled by the brilliant white light of the great Ādiśeṣa, his body like mercury, like quartz, like the Ocean of Milk, shining like a lotus drowned in clear white moonlight. Śeṣa's long drawn body, the primal origin of all the five elements, was formed from the souls of assembled saints. And now his hoods made a pillow for the Lord.

He with Four Arms leaned on one elbow, and near the golden epaulet that adorned his shoulder, his soft cheek rested in the palm of his hand, already red, but further reddened by the Āḻvār saints whose hearts are forever drowned in meditative love.

The Lord was resting on Śeṣa's skin, thin and white like a cloth made of flowers that fell from the Tree of the Immortal Gods. Viṣṇucitta and the others looked up at his divine beauty, and the crocodile earrings that hung near his temples seemed to reflect the golden honey that flowed from his lotus face, reminding everyone of that fateful day when He saved the Elephant King and absorbed that tormenting crocodile into his divine form.

And as they gazed at him unblinking, the Lord appeared both black and white, but when they were forced to blink, He seemed like sparkling silver. They were drowned and blinded in the flood of His beauty, a form beyond all forms.

His long eyes were streaked with fine red lines, like scattered petals from a red lotus flower. And his drooping black lashes were like the loving shade, and the cloak of darkness, that act as wives for the Sun and Moon.

His lower lip stole redness from the flower called Flame of the Forest, blazing like Agni born from his mouth. And his nose, like a laughing sesame flower, extended out just a little, to greet his friend the Bearer of Scents.

The Lord lay on his side and his long arms like iron maces extended down his back, stretching from his ornamented shoulder to his jewel inlaid wristbands and rings. Those long black arms appeared like Rāhu, the lunar eclipse. And seeing the white light that shone from the lotus at the Lord's navel, Rāhu thought the full Moon was trying to escape his wrath by taking refuge with the Lord. But in fear for his own life, Rāhu bowed down beside the Lord and offered a bribe of gems and coins to Lakṣmi, the Moon's sister who resides at the god's golden feet.

His birthmark Śrīvatsa was a spectacle for the eye and upon his chest was the incomparable Kaustubha Gem. The corona of light that it emitted was enough to fill the entire hall. And there the Lotus-Born Lakṣmi, whose body is pure as pure can be, resided in effulgent glory.

The fragrance of his navel, finer than deer musk, attracted a line of bumble bees, shaped like the garland of delicate black tulasi leaves, hanging across his chest.

His waist was thin and sleek like a lion, as if he had forgotten to transform part of his body when he changed from the demon-slaying Narasiṁha back into a man.

The jewel encrusted golden belt around his giant hips appeared like the soft rays of the Jewel in the Sky, setting over the western mountains. His dark black thighs could be seen through the fine yellow silk that covered them, like two lapis pillars layered with topaz.

His glowing victory anklet was like heaven's golden enclosure, an ornament for his heel when he grew slowly, slowly through the sky as the God of Three Paces. And when that ring of golden light combined with heaven's splendour, his ankles turned dark red like banyan berries, or the shell of a baby turtle, as if he was prophesizing his tortoise birth.

His feet were marked with signs from his life– a plough, a thunderbolt, a vase, a lotus, a crocodile and goad. They could remove all the three troubles of life. His toes were soft like the interior of a red lotus, redder still from rubbing up against Lakṣmi's kuṁkum-covered breasts. His toenails were like twinkling stars, radiating a moonlight halo that could dispel any darkness in the hearts of devotees.

This is the Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Eternal God, the Primordial Progenitor and the Ultimate Man. Son of Vasudeva, Savior of Vibhīṣaṇa and Lord of The Senses. He is the God who removes the pains of his devotees, He is the One praised by Śiva, He is the Father of Love, and the Lover of Śrīraṅgam!

Seeing God, Viṣṇucitta and his daughter along with the other worshippers, were drowned in waves of joy, fear and devotion. 'Jaya! Jaya!' they cried as they fell to the ground and bowed with every part their of bodies.

Then Viṣṇucitta rose, joined his hands above his forehead and began to pray.

VI.99
Praise to You, most precious treasure in the Creator's Abode!
Praise to You, a treasury of merits in the long line of Ikṣvāku!
Praise to You, beloved of Vibhīṣaṇa, brother to Kubera, Lord of Treasures!
Praise to You, O Lord of Śrīraṅgam,
God of gods, who all other gods bow down to.

VI.100
Soul of the Universe and Lord of All Beings
You are Infinite, Indivisible and Invisible!
You are the foundation of the whole world
and yet You exist without support.
You are the composite universe of molecules
and yet You are subtle as an atom.
You are the Eternal. You are the Truth.

VI.101
O Nārāyaṇa!
Resting on the Waters of Creation and
Dwelling in the Hearts of Man.
You are greater than the Aggregate Substances,
beyond even Heaven and Earth!
You are the Venerable, the Lofty, the Ultimate Man!
O Nārāyaṇa! Praise to You who grants salvation.

VI.102
God beyond gods, You are Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva.
For the entire universe, You are the force
of creation, existence and dissolution!
I worship only You Nārāyaṇa, the Great Light,
the everlasting home of all beings.

VI.103
You are the Supreme Being, beyond both man and god.
You are the Highest Soul, constantly meditated upon
by assemblies of yogis in search of salvation.
You pervade every part of the natural world
and yet You cannot be classified by the Three Qualifying Colors.
You are imperceptible to the power of the Collective Senses,
existing as purity without a mark.

You are the Source of the Primal Elements–
Stainless, Pure and All-Pervading!
From hours to minutes, to the blink of an eye
You are the passage of the thread of time.
O Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, the Greatest God!
I am led to service when I imagine You.

RAṄGANĀTHA

VI.104
This is how Viṣṇucitta praised the divine actions of the God Who is Adorned With the Kaustubha Gem, the God Worshipped by All Other Gods– the Ultimate Inner Image that is a Perfect Emanation of Self-Manifested Light.

Waves of compassion poured from the Lord's eyes, like questions that asked about everyone's welfare. And then he saw the beautiful young Goda, Giver of the Worn Garland. He could hear the jingle of her bracelets, and he could see the part in hair, adorned with pearls and gems, as she bent down low to offer flowers at his lotus feet. He watched her intently and thought to himself–

VI.105
'Her eyes must be why
    Lakṣmi was jealous, and gave the Love God a flag of victory.
Her trembling waist must be why
    April was brave enough to step foot on earth.
Her full breasts must be why
    Rati gained fame, moving her hands across her vīṇa.
Her beautiful face must be why
    Saraswati's swan found a lotus nest.
Her long braids must be why
    the peacock felt union after longing.

Her red feet must be why
    thirsty bees follow at her footsteps.'

VI.106
Viṣṇu was eager, he couldn't contain his desire,
he whisked her off to his private chambers, and in her place
he left an illusion, a woman in her image, created by him.
Viṣṇucitta and the others didn't even notice,
they all remained there perfectly still.

VI.107
Priests arrived and offered holy water blessed by the Lord's feet along with a sacred cloth reserved for special devotees. They lifted the illusionary Goda into a palanquin to carry her back to Śrī Villiputtūr, but when they pulled back the drape that covered the window, she was gone–

VI.108
'Save me!' cried Viṣṇucitta.
'My daughter has been carried away
by this Lord of Śrīraṅgam, a man of ultimate power,
a man who can put Brahma and other gods in their place.
Is it fair for him to rob an innocent brahman like me?'

He threw up his hands in despair,
his arms weak and withered like stalks of straw
as he fell into an ocean of sorrow.
'Look sirs!' he said to the assembly of men
as he choked up with tears–

VI.109
'When he loves her so much,
wouldn't I make arrangements for a proper wedding?
Shall I give him my body, my life?
Everything that I have– children, home, cattle, wealth and more,
they're all for his devotees so they can perform pūjas.
Oh, you all know this!   Can't you understand?
Take this little child from me and I'm nothing!

VI.110
Śiva, Brahma and Indra are just like other worshippers,
they're powerless to call this an injustice!'
'You're out of control!' yelled Viṣṇucitta at Viṣṇu.
'Oh, it's only fitting that you forget justice!
All the worlds are yours, Mother Compassion stands by your side
and worshippers surround you, but who's left to be on my side?

VI.111
You have Lakṣmi, Nīḷa, and Bhūdevi.

What can I say when you set your mind
on pure, innocent Goda.
What's that smirk? Are you mocking an old man?
Have you gone mad?
Who can make right the crooked flow of rivers?'

VI.112
This is how Viṣṇucitta scorned the King of the World who relieves the suffering of his devotees.
But now he was scared. He realized how foolishly he had insulted the Lord's dignity.

Then a little smile lit up across Raṅganātha's face, adorned
with the crocodile earrings that gently hung to his mirror-like cheeks.

VI.113
And the Lord said, 'O wise sage,
have you lost your mind from old age?
Your daughter is safe at home.
You've attacked me with abuses,
right here in the open!

Go and search your house, just one more time
and accuse me then
if you don't see her sparkling eyes.
Don't have such extreme thoughts.
Go and see for yourself.'

VI.114
'O, my father!' moaned Viṣṇucitta.
'What's done is done. I can't bear such misery.
Speak from within and calm me with kindness.'

'May you be victorious!' cried Viṣṇucitta
as he stopped the flow of tears
and rushed back home.

VI.115
As the Āḻvār approached his home
his daughter ran out to greet him.
He kissed her head and shed tears of joy.
'My child! I see you!' he cried
as he caressed her hair with his hand like butter.

THE WEDDING

VI.116
The Lord of Śrīraṅgam sent Brahma and Sarasvati
and Siva and Parvati, in the company of his general
to ask for Goda's hand in marriage.
And when Viṣṇucitta saw them all coming,
he was overwhelmed with excitement.

VI.117
With Viśvaksena at their head, the gods approached humbly and were treated to every hospitality. Once they were all seated, Viṣṇucitta asked about their coming. They replied, and his heart was filled with a rush of joy.

VI.118
'O Viśvaksena, Śiva and Brahma!
By asking for my daughter on his behalf
you've made me a proud man.
A tradition was born
when honourable Bhṛgu gave away his daughter Śrī
who was born from the Ocean of Milk.
If that was right, then there's no injustice here.

VI.119
Please listen. Let us make this a proper union.
Easy-going people might say he carried her off.
If he agrees to come to our village,
I'll happily give away my daughter.

VI.120
His great lordship makes him the Ultimate Sovereign.
That God Born in the Line of Śūra who has humble subjects at his feet
will surely grant this simple favour for his future father-in-law.
For it is he who creates the costumes that we wear,
and though our roles may be great, his play is greater!'

VI.121
Then the gods left to petition the Lord of the World
whose heart was soaked in a flood of compassion
as he mounted his great vehicle the King of Birds.
Then Brahma and all the other gods climbed onto their mounts,
surrounding him as they set out singing songs of praise.

VI.122
Viśvaksena, Beloved of Sūtravati, stood before his troops
aligned on the highway of stars.
Celestial elders held decorative swords and thunderbolts,

their blinding brilliance spreading in every direction
like a hundred million shining suns.

VI.123
The wedding party proceeded to Śrī Viliputtur. And on the way, they stopped at perfectly spaced guesthouses made out of jewels, built by Viśvakarma, master craftsman of the gods.

The handsome groom was in front, accompanied by heavenly nymphs bathed in turmeric and adorned with precious ornaments. He was flanked by ancient seers chanting prayers, and a celestial orchestra conducted by Nārada. Water Bearers created a faint drizzle, white like titanium, and streamed down an ablution of nectar, revealing the Kaustubha Gem like a ruby pendant in his pearl necklace.

Viṣṇu's neck was white like a conch shell and he was adorned with two golden epaulets and a wedding bracelet. He was a living ornament, decked with two crocodile earrings and a ceremonial crown.

He was smeared with holy paste and anointed with perfumed oil. He was draped in robes of golden yellow and across his chest hung a garland made of tulasi leaves and flowers from the Trees of Heaven. This is how the bridegroom looked, just before he stepped foot in the door. Viṣṇucitta was joyous, and he humbly welcomed the Lord into his home.

VI.124
Pārvati and Sarasvati led the ten million women of heaven
in singing happy songs
about the splendour of Sīta and Rāma's wedding.

VI.125
Affectionately, Ekāvaḷi and Sragviṇi fanned her
from both sides with yaktail fans.
Earlier, the wives of the Seven Sages
gently smeared her with turmeric paste
and blessed her as they made her into a bride.

VI.126
The marriage rites were conducted according to tradition.
Goda was bathed in rose water, poured out
from golden pots decorated with jewels.
Her body was caressed with perfume
and her head was massaged with fragrant oil
that scented her flowing curls.
And like this, the Queen of the World
turned from woman to goddess.

VI.127
Goda was glowing in her thin wet cīra.
She was seated on a platform made out of gems

as incense smoke dried her long black hair.
Then She with Eyes Like a Doe
lovingly gathered her hair to tie a braid.

VI.128
One friend spread lac water
across her feet and pretty white nails.
Another clasped a silver anklet around her leg
and decorated her toes with rings.
One lovingly dressed her in a cīra of white silk,
painted with a border of gold.
And another tied an ornamented belt
around her vine-like waist.
One adorned her arms with armlets, and her neck with necklaces
and pearls that sparkled like stars.
And another tied a wedding band around her wrist,
while the others slipped rings on her fingers.
They fastened earrings to her ears, and a nosering to her nose
and placed a gem at her brow
that fell gently from the part in her hair.

VI.129
And yet another friend applied lines of kāṭuka
around her bright white eyes.
She perfumed her body with deer musk
and placed a chaplet of red lilies in her hair
which was tied up, to one side, in a bun.

VI.130
This is how Goda was adorned, just before Ādiśeṣa, the Bed of Snakes, announced that the auspicious moment was drawing close. The constellations aligned themselves like tassels in her braids and the sphere of the Sun shone like twelve holy flames, while the Moon, enemy of the flower with a hundred petals, offered up shade like a cooling parasol. The Lord of Rivers arrived carrying gifts, sprinkling petals from red water lilies that he gathered as he passed through the marketplace.

Like the coming of Nature herself, the groom's party made up of the gods and their wives arrived bearing gifts. The God of Fire lit fragrant sandalwood incense while the God of Rain raised a processional canopy.

Groups of bards recited ancient verses and told tales from royal chronicles while Nārada and Sananda, along with the other mind-born sons of Brahma, played festive music that touched the heart.

The great bird Garuḍa carried Viṣṇu like a wild elephant fitted with a golden howdah studded with gems. And as the supernatural procession of gods and goddesses passed before Viṣṇucitta, he welcomed them all.

Viṣṇu stretched out his hand and placed it on Viśvaksena's shoulder as he got down from his vehicle. Then Viṣṇucitta, that most devout of devotees became so filled with excitement that he offered the most gracious of greetings in utter excess.

Viṣṇu stepped foot in the doorway and was led inside by bright-eyed women who washed his feet in giant platters. Saints rushed in, falling on top of each other, yelling ‘Me first, me first!’ as they flooded in to drink that holy water, scooping up every drop until the Earth was left dry.

Viṣṇu sat down on a golden dais that was especially arranged for the groom. His father-in-law poured water from a silver vase into a plate made of gold, and washed the Lord's feet, delicate as tender sprouts. He adorned him and served him in sixteen different ways, and offered him a mixture of yogurt and brown sugar.

Then that Āḻvār, along with his pious wife, solemnly bestowed their jewel of a daughter to the Lord. And then. . .

VI.131
Between the couple, the elder gods held a long cloth,
decorated with strings of sparkling pearls, a black border,
and tiny figures painted in gold.
And as the auspicious moment drew close
they lowered the veil.

With deep love for each other, the couple held
jaggery-sweetened cumin in their soft hands
and eagerly exchanged playful glances
that everyone could see.

VI.132
Afterwards, Goda poured rice mixed with pearls
on Viṣṇu's head, adorned with a bāsikam of holy basil.
And as her sprout-like fingers brushed past him,
the God Who Wields a Discus broke out in a sweat.
Shiny pearls and beads of sweat fell from his black body
like a stream of rain and hailstones from a cloud.

VI.133
When Goda lifted her cupped hands filled with rice
Viṣṇu quickly stole a peek at her round, full breasts.
She noticed and felt shy-
she pretended she couldn't raise her arms any further
and tossed up the rice with the tips of her fingers.

VI.134
Chills went down her body
as Viṣṇu tied the wedding necklace around her neck.

And then husband and wife tied sacred wedding bands
around each other's wrists.

VI.135
Following tradition, an altar of fire was made with dried out grains
and Viṣṇu, Holder of the Sāraṅga Bow, led Goda around it
with the Seven Steps.

Together they looked up at the Star of Arundhati
in the Constellation Formed of the Seven Sages.

Then the couple humbly accepted wedding presents
given by Brahma, Śiva and all the other millions of gods
and sent them off with silver platters all laden with gifts.

Glowing with joy, Viṣṇu took Goda back to his home.
And there on the banks of the Kāveri, in a grove of sandalwood trees
he made love to his wife, the woman with curls of black.

And though he ruled the universe, Love ruled his heart
and he reigned supreme, spreading peace throughout the world.

[VI.136 – V.140 Āśvāsāntam Verses. The epic ends with four highly Sanskritic verses in praise of Viṣṇu. The ending colophon translated in Chapter 3 describes Kṛṣṇadevarāya's conquest of the Gajapatis in Kaliṅga.**]**

5.5 Annotations[428]

INVOCATION

I.1 As the *avatārika padyam* or introductory verse to the great epic, this beautiful poem sets out the foundational spirit of the entire text to follow. The idea here is one of reflected imaginations, layers of substance and meaning that overlap, intertwine, interact and ultimately reveal a higher reality. The poem begins, as all beginnings do, with the letter Śrī, an invocation of the goddess Lakṣmi who is inseparable from the god Nārāyaṇa.

Here the god and goddess are facing each other, gazing at each other, each one seeing their own image in the ornament of the other. But this external reality is a mere reflection of the truth that lies within their respective hearts (*paraspara ātmalu andu*), for both hold an image of the other deep within themselves. This truth rises to the surface just as the poem's inner meaning becomes evident. The verse ends with a salutation to the poet's chosen deity (*iṣṭa devata*) who is Lord Vĕṅkaṭeśvara at Tirupati. The god and goddess are unified (*ākalitambulain*a) in the final line, a direct reference to the Śrī Vaiṣṇava philosophy that Śrī and Viṣṇu, even as the name of the tradition suggests, represent a singular godhead. For further analysis of this verse, see NRS 37-39.

The tone of the poem is both devotional and romantic, clearly reflecting the prevailing *rasas* or aesthetic moods of *bhakti* and *sṛṅgār*a that flow throughout the whole text. It is written in the *utpalamāla* meter (literally 'lotus-garland') which functions as a reference to the title character Āmuktamālyada or Goda Devi, the giver of garlands.

I.2 This verse is in praise of Ādiśeṣa, the serpent bed of the divine couple. He is invoked here as a self-controlled witness (*dāntuni)* to the extremely enjoyable (TKR 1 *praharṣiñcu* = *amitaṅgā santoṣiñce*) lovemaking that creates the universe. Here the romantic sentiment introduced in the previous verse is heightened and made explicit. There is also a distinction made between the two forms of the goddess, the celestial Lakṣmi and the earthly Bhūdevi, with Goda being an incarnation of the latter.

The poem also makes reference to the great Viśiṣṭa Advaita philosopher Rāmanuja, who the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas believe is an incarnation of Ādiśeṣa.

I.3 Written in the long *sīsa* meter, this poem is a *tour de force* description of the power of Garuḍa's flapping wings. According to legend, the King of Birds is the sworn enemy of the snakes (*nāgas*). The 'submarine mare of fire' (*baḍabāgni,* Skt *vaḍavāgni*) refers to an ancient story of Vedic origin that tells of a mare's head that rests at the bottom of the ocean and spews molten lava until the end of time.

This verse along with the six that follow are written in praise of the Āḻvārs. According to Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition, each saint is associated with a particular figure or *āyudham* (weapon/instrument) related to Lord Viṣṇu. The associations are as follows:

Āḻvār	**Association**
Pŏyigai Āḻvār	Pāñcajanyam (conch)
Bhūt Āḻvār	Kaumodika (mace)

[428] The following annotations are in large part taken from Reddy's *Giver of the Worn Garland: Krishnaadevarāya's Āmuktamālyada*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010.

Pe Āḻvār	Nandaka (sword)
Tirumaleśa Āḻvār	Sudarśana (discus)
Nammāḻvār	Viśvaksena
Madhura Kavi Āḻvār	Garuḍa
Kulaśekhara Āḻvār	Kaustubha (gem)
Pĕriya Āḻvār	Garuḍa
Āṇḍaḷ	Bhūdevi
Tŏṇḍaraḍippŏḍi Āḻvār	Vanamāla (garland)
Tiruppān Āḻvār	Śrīvatsa
Tirumaṅgai Āḻvār	Sāraṅga (bow)

I.4 The world is described here as *aja-aṇḍa-bhāṇḍamu*, a huge clay pot big enough to hold the entire universe, literally Brahma's egg (cf. IV.21). The poem is in praise of Viśvaksena's *kāñcana vetram*, the golden rattan staff that he wields like a potter's stick. When the staff is in motion the universe is created, and when it is motionless, all the worlds become dormant or unconscious (*jāḍyacetana*). 'spin his wheel' has been added to highlight the implied metaphor (cf. Note VI.96).

I.5 The image here contrasts the whiteness of the Pāñcajanyam conch with the blackness that flows towards Viṣṇu's mouth as he breathes. The black bees at his lap are there because he is Padmanābha (Lotus Navel).

The theme of creation developed in the last three verses is continued here as the world-generating syllable *aum* is believed to originate from the great conch.

I.6 This rather complex image is based on the design of old wooden lampstands with multi-level platforms (*pratata-ūrdhva-adhara-bhāga*) capable of holding several burning lamps.

I.7 This poem is based on the story of Sāḷva, the demon king who performed *tapas* and gained the favour of Lord Śiva. He was granted a flying city enclosed with a wall made of gold and gems but both he and his city were destroyed when he attacked Lord Kṛṣṇa's capital at Dvāraka.

I.8 When Kṛṣṇa liberated the city of Mathura, Trivakra lovingly attended to him and Kṛṣṇa blessed her by straightening her hunched body. He stepped on her toes with his feet and pulled her up by the chin (*padbhyām ākramya prapade*, see *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.42.7). A bow is known to have three curves and a similar technique of stepping is used when it is strung. The metaphor plays on the opposing action of straightening a body and bending a bow.

I.9 During the Churning of the Milky Ocean, Viṣṇu appeared as the beautiful maiden Mohini in order to distract the *asuras* and distribute *amṛta* to the *devas*. The *asura* Rāhu detected the ruse and disguised himself as a *deva* so that he could partake in the nectar, but when Viṣṇu found out, he launched his discus Sudarśana and decapitated the demon.

I.10 This verse employs a play on the word *sūri*, which can mean teacher, saint or sun.

THE DREAM

I.11 The veracity of this *vacanam* is supported by historical evidence related to the king's conquest of Kaliṅga. 'special day of fasting' is *ekādaśi*, the eleventh day of the fortnight sacred to Vaiṣṇavas. Based on astrological evidence, historians have located the exact date of the dream to 15 January 1516. For more information regarding variant calculations of the dream's date, see Sistla 2010: 103.

I.12 This dream vision of the Lord is based on standard poetic conventions of beauty being surpassed by the god's divine form (cf. *Manu Caritramu* VI.102).

I.13 The texts referred to in this poem are most likely descriptive titles. They are cited in the verse as*: Madālasa-caritra*, *Satyāvadhū-prīṇanambu*, *Sakala-kathā-sāra-saṅgrahambu*, *Jñana-cintāmaṇi* and *Rasa-mañjarī*.

I.14 VVS 13 identifies the man who offered the garlands as Sudāma, a caretaker in Kaṁsa's garden who finds minor mention in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. TKR 14-15, however, cites a story from the *Āndhranāyaka Śatakam* that is quite similar to the story of Āṇḍaḷ in the Tamil tradition. Here a priest presents garlands to his favourite courtesan before offering them to the Lord. Then one day the king notices a hair in one of the garlands and scolds the errant priest.

The phrase *appinnadi* in reference to Goda is actually *ā* + *pinnadi*, literally 'that little one'. If taken with the preceding nasal, it becomes *nappinadi* which in Tamil (*nappinai*) is a term for Nīḻa Devi, or Goda.

I.15 VVS 20 interprets the phrase *tĕlugŏ-kaṇḍa* as 'Why Telugu? For it is sweet.' *kaṇḍa* is glossed as *pulakaṇḍa* or sugarcandy. I along with Professor P. Ramanarasimham believe this to be a rather farfetched interpretation and prefer to read the line as *tĕlug'ŏkaṇḍa* or 'Telugu is one of a kind.' TKR also corroborates this interpretation later in his commentary. See also VVS 13 *tĕlug'ŏkkaṭiye*.

The famous last line of this poem first appears in Vinukŏṇḍa Vallabharāya's 14th century *Krīḍābhirāmam*, albeit in a very diffrent tone (see Narayana Rao 1995, 34). It does however imply that pride in the Telugu language was not new to the 16th century Vijayanagara poets.

I.18 'Turvasu lineage' links Śrī Kṛṣṇadevarāya's ancestry to the *candra-vaṁsam* of the *Mahābhārata*. Turvasu was a son of Yayāti and Devayāni.

CHAPTER I

ŚRĪ VILLIPUTTŪR

I.51 The first poem in this section again reinforces the notion that reality is something imagined. The word *bhrama* can mean illusion, delusion, misconception, misapprehension, mistaken belief or false idea, and is employed in reference to the unmentioned passersby (i.e. the reader) who see these mansions. My thanks to Professor P. Ramanarasimham for his spirited recitation and commentary on this verse.

The phrase *minnulato rāyu* literally 'sky-scraping' has been omitted. See the description of Madhura mansions in Chapter II where this theme is more fully developed.

ADD: "storeyed mansions" are mentioned in NT signature verses, like AM's description!

I.52 Vaijayanta is the name of Indra's palace in his capital Amarāvati.

I.53 This long *sīsa padyam* includes several intricate images, and is one of the most complex verses in the text. It is important to keep in mind the layout of a South Indian home and the design of a typical entranceway. Usually a small staircase leads to a covered veranda and then a doorway leads to the atrium. The steps are usually flanked by short walls, decorated in this case with motifs of lions and elephants.

ADD: yā̲li (vyāla/gaja-simha) see *Āmuktamālyada* I.53 – interesting description and analysis, as art historian and visual adept, he located an very convincing sculpture of ornamental lions with long elephantine trunks decorating the flanks of a small staircase from Krishna Temple in Hampi (Sistla 2010: 11, 158)

The conch and discus are the sacred symbols of Viṣṇu and indicate that these are all Vaiṣṇava households (cf. V.37). See Note V.20 for *bāsikam*, here loosely translated as 'wedding crown'. The Eight Guardian Elephants are the *aṣṭa-dig-gajas* who bear the weight of the universe and guard the four cardinal and four intermediary directions. The image of Lakṣmi seated in a lotus and pouring gold from a pot with two white elephants in the background is very common in modern iconography.

I.54-55 These two poems have been combined because the image of coconut tree-lined roads paved with diamonds is repeated in both. Smearing floors with cow dung and decorating entranceways with powdered lime patterns are daily activities still practised in Indian villages.

The Ocean is considered to be the source of all precious stones. The diamond-paved lanes appear like the white River Gaṅga (*prathama-bhārya*) and the coconut trees are compared to the Pārijata trees of the sky-roaming gods (*bhraga-taru*).

I.56 The *Divya Prabandham* is mentioned by name in this verse, here translated as 'songs of devotion' (cf. I.84).

I.57 cf. V.57.

I.58 Mount Meru is believed to be the home of the gods and Mount Mandara is considered to give the gods their food because it was used to churn the Ocean of Milk and produce *amṛTam* These mountains are being led through the town on massive temple chariots so that the mansions of Śrī Villiputtūr can judge their relative greatness (*mithaḥ tāratamyambulu*). Professor P. Ramanarasimham rightly notes that the mansions are the most qualified judges for this contest because, unlike Meru and Mandara that only provide *one* thing, the Śrī Villiputtūr mansions provide *both* food and shelter.

This poem is written in the Mahā-sragdhara meter, a 22-syllable *vṛtta* meter with the *gaṇa* arrangement: sa-ta-ta-na-sa-ra-ra-ga.

I.59 This is the first in a series of verses that describe the activities of Śrī Villiputtūr's temple courtesans (Skt *devadāsī*, Tel *guḍi ceṭi*). These ladies are praised not only for their beauty and learning, but also for their religiosity and dedicated service to Lord Viṣṇu and his temples. Compare this to the description of the more urbanized courtesans of Madhura (cf. II.30).

I.60 The Telugu word for *pān* used here is *vīḍĕmpu*. TKR 64 glosses *bāsa* (Skt *bhāṣā*) as *deśa-bhāṣalalo*, referring to regional languages as opposed to Sanskrit.

I.61 Civets are nocturnal cat-like carnivores with well-developed scent glands that produce a fragrant oil. Scented incense smoke (*sāmbrāṇi*) is used to perfume women's hair when it's still wet after bathing.

I.63 The syllable *śrī* శ్రీ in Telugu is believed to resemble a woman's ear adorned with an earring. The word itself means wealth and prosperity.

I.66 Rājanam is a special, high quality rice of reddish color.
I.67 Rice requires a lot of water to grow and paddy fields are often flooded with water. When it is time for the harvest, the fields are drained and dried out.

I.68 *veru panasa* is a variety of jackfruit that bears fruit from underground roots (*veru*). Here Spring is personified as a king (*vasanta-nṛpa*).

I.69 *tomālĕ* from *toṭa* + *māla* (literally 'garden garland') is a wreath, garland or string of flowers and leaves (Brown 347). TKR 72 cites that this is the typical offering given to the local Śrī Villiputtūr deity Śrī Mannāru Svāmi.

I.70 This beautiful poem is based on the four main ingredients needed to make *tāmbūlam*: betel leaf, areca nut, lime and sweetener. Here it is described as a 'red aphrodisiac' (*ĕṟi mandu*). Even today, it is quite common to see large hearths used to cook down sugarcane juice into jaggery (*bĕllam*) right beside the sugarcane fields. The grinding of sugarcane pearls (? *muttiyamulu*) into powdered lime (*cūrṇamu*) is unclear.

I.71 This verse employs onomatopoeic phraseology (see also I.72, I.74 and IV.27). The use of reduplicated sound words is particularly popular in Telugu, and still quite common in the modern spoken language. Here the call of water birds (*nīru koḷ*) is described as *kŏla-kŏla-(m)-añcun,* literally 'making the sound *kŏl kŏl*'.

The smell of camphor (*kaprapun valapulu*) is due to the stagnant algae and probably refers to a sulphurous odour.

I.73 ‘northern temple to Viṣṇu’ is *udaj-mahālayavat*, the poet's Sanskritization of the Tamil name for the god *vaḍappĕrum-goyiluḍaiyān*. *tulasi* leaves and garlands are traditional offerings made at Vaiṣṇava temples.

‘purifying’ is used here for *puṇyampu* and *tāpatrayi mīṭī,* the removal of the three troubles- difficulties caused by the self, others, or the will of god.

I.74 This verse includes the onomatopoeic phrase *ghallu-(m)-añcu-uliyan* which I have tried to translate with alliteration and consonance.

I.76 This poem is a detailed *sīsa-padyam* that vividly describes the caring treatment offered to pilgrims who visit Śrī Villiputtūr. It functions as a transitional verse, preparing the reader for the introduction of Viṣṇucitta, and foreshadowing the colorful description of pilgrim activities, both religious and gastronomical.

‘full body prostrations’ is *aṣṭānga-mĕraṅgi*, bowing with all eight limbs touching the ground. In South Indian villages ‘coconut fibre mats’ (*nārikeḷa-kaṭa-āsanamulan*), ‘broad banana leaves’ (*rambhā-viśāla-parṇamulu*) and ‘little bowls made of woven areca leaves’ (*poka-pŏtti-kuṭṭina-dŏppa*) are still commonly used to serve meals.

VIṢṆUCITTA

I.77 In this poem 'the sacred Viṣṇu mantra' is simply referred to as *dvayam*, the second of the three holy Vaiṣṇava mantras (cf. V.92). The first is the famous *aṣṭākṣara* or eight-syllable mantra (cf. II.87) *Om Namo Nārāyaṇāya*, the second is *śrīman nārāyaṇa caranau śaraṇam prapadye | śrīmate nārāyaṇāya namaḥ,* and the third is *Bhagavad Gīta* 18.66 '*sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja | aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*' The Śrī Vaiṣṇavas call this the *carama śloka* because they view it as the last verse of the *Bhagavad Gīta*.

The verse uses the compound syllable '*dv*' in various ways to highlight the dualities overcome by Viṣṇucitta.

I.78 Like many of Śrī Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *vacanams*, this prose passage is filled with pairs of rhyming words, especially in the section highlighting the various philosophical schools (cf. III.8). Cited and critiqued here are following groups: Cārvākas or Materialists (*hetu-vādam*), Alchemists (*dhātu-vādam*), Vaiśeṣikas or Atomists (*kāṇādambu,* after their founder Kaṇāda), Sāṁkhyans (*kāpilambu,* after the sage Kapila), Pūrva-Mīmāṁsans, and Vyākaranis or Grammarians.

The story of Jaḍa Bharata is found in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* as well as Canto V of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Bharata was a wise and ancient king of the Solar Dynasty (*sūrya-vaṁsam*), reborn as a strong-bodied but rather quiet brahman who, unbeknownst to his family, was already a fully realized being. Taking him for a dull brute, they called him *jaḍa* or stupid (cf. Note I.2). He was employed by King Rāhūgaṇu of Sauvīra as one of his four palanquin bearers, but due to his great adherence to *ahiṁsa* (non-violence) he constantly avoided stepping on worms and insects by jumping and jerking while carrying the load. Angered by this unpleasantness the king scolded him and asked 'What's wrong with you?' to which Jaḍa Bharata replied 'Who am I and who are you?' and proceeded to enlighten the king about the true nature of reality.

For a Jain account of this story in which Bharata is a *cakravartin* who attains *mokṣa*, see Padmanabha Jaini's article 'Jina Ṛṣabha as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu' in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies*, Vol XL, part 2, pp. 321-337.

I.79 Viṣṇucitta is referred to here as *yogīśvaruḍu*, the ultimate yogi. In other instances he is called a *mahā-muni*, great seer, *niṣṭha-nidhi,* treasury of devotion, etc. Exalted appellations such as these become quite common throughout the remainder of the text (cf. I.84, IV.15, IV.32).

I.80-82 Some of the culinary terms used in these scrumptious descriptions of seasonal meals are: crispy black lentil chips (*vadiyamulu*), dried vegetable stir-fries (*varugulu*), jaggery-flavored broths (*tiyyani cārulu*), sweet and savoury porridges (*timmanambulu, palucani ambaḷulu*), sweet cakes (*rasāvaḷulu* from *atirasamulu* = *arisĕlu*, see II.96-97), tender green mangoes (*vaḍa piṇḍĕlu*, see Brown 678), green vegetables flavoured with mustard powder (*āvan cigurkŏnu paccaḷḷu*) and pickled fruits (*ūruṅgāyalu*).

'sizzling' is used for the onomatopoeic phrase *cuyyanu nāda*, literally 'making a sound that goes *cuyyi'.*

I.83 Saturdays (*śanivāram*) are considered auspicious by Vaiṣṇavas. 'holy river' is simply referred to here as *nadi*. *ippa-piṇḍi* is flour made from the seeds of the Butter Tree or Mahua

Tree. A mixture of coarse flour and oil is used as an exfoliating soap to cleanse and moisturize the body.

I.84 Here again the Tamil *Divya Prabandham* is referenced by name (cf. I.56). 'sacred stories of Viṣṇu' is *nagendra-śayānu puṇya kathalu*.

Interestingly, Viṣṇucitta speaks in Sanskrit here, possibly as a *lingua franca* that would have been understood by all the visiting devotees (cf. IV.6 where the speakers are gods).

CHAPTER II

MADHURA

II.1 Each chapter (*āśvāsam*) begins with an invocatory verse; these poems, however, do not rise to the poetic level of I.1.

The exact instance in which Viṣṇu returns the riches of the gods is unclear. The term *kramaṇa* is glossed by TKR 93 as *daṇḍa-yātra*, an invasion or campaign, in which case the appellation could refer to any of Viṣṇu's ten *avatāras*. In the case that *kramaṇa* is taken to be *pādākramaṇam*, the term is certainly in reference to Viṣṇu as Vāmana when he killed the demon king Bali by stepping on his head.

II.3 This is the first of several *sīsa padyams* (cf. II.30, V.51 and VI.105) that use a repeated phrase in each of the first four couplets. In this case it is the rhetorical 'In what city?' (*e vīṭan*).

This reference to Sugriva (*kapi-vara*) is taken from Chapter 41 in the Kiṣkindha Kāṇḍa of the *Rāmāyaṇa* when Sugrīva sends troops to the south in search of Sīta. Compare to IV.41.18b-19a *'tato hema-mayam divyam muktā maṇi vibhūṣitam| yuktam kavāṭam pāṇḍyānām gatā drakṣyatha vānarāḥ'*.

The last line of the poem employs a sound play that embeds the name 'Madhura' in a Sanskrit compound- *dakṣiṇa madhura sāndra-dru**ma-dhura**.* Madhura is referred to here as *dakṣiṇā* (southern) in order to distinguish it from Mathura in north India, the traditional birthplace of Kṛṣṇa.

II.4 Tripura (literally 'three cities') was a mythical city built for the *asuras* by the architect Maya. The three cities made of iron, silver and gold were built on the earth, sky and heaven respectively and set in perpetual motion. Tripura could only be defeated by a single arrow that could pierce through all three cities in one straight shot. The *devas* beseeched Lord Śiva to destroy the demon city, and he did so by using Mount Meru as his bow. For a rich account of this story see Śrīnātha's *Bhīma-khaṇḍamu* in NRS 120 -127.

In 1840 the British East India company razed the ancient fort and filled in the city moat. The present-day Veli streets mark the limits of the old city.

II.6 The River Gaṅga is known as *tripathaga* ('moving in three paths') because it flows in heaven, on earth, and underground, known as Mandākini, Bhāgīrathi and Bhogavati respectively. There are eight kinds of *bhogas* (enjoyments), namely: home (*gṛham*), bed (*sayya*), clothes (*vastram*), jewellery (*ābharaṇam*), women (*stri*), flowers (*puṣpam*), betel leaf (*tāmbūlam*) and finally fragrance (*gandham*), hence Bhogavati as the River of Perfume. In addition, *bhoga* can simply mean snake or snake hood, and therefore Bhogavati is also the name given to the capital city of the *nāga* realm.

The *alaṅkāra* used here is known as *nirukti* or derivational.

II.7 *gārutmatamulu* or *gāruḍamulu* are dark green emeralds. Both terms can also mean 'of or relating to the eagle Garuḍa'. These emeralds are also known to be an antidote for snake venom.

II.8 This image is based on the ancient science of alchemy (*rasa-vādam*, cf. I.78) through which practioners could transform iron into gold using the juice from special plants.

II.9 The River Gaṅga flows around Amarāvati like a moat and is likened to the white cloth that wrestlers wrap around their waists (*kāsĕ*). The Madhura cannon barrels (*dañcanapu cetulu*, literally 'cannon hands') seem to slip under this cloth (*tūṟagān* or *dūṟagān*).

II.10 *uduṭu gubbalu* are large ornamental knobs that protrude from the city gate; they are shaped like lotus buds and made out of metal. Here they are intended to be compared to the breasts of a young woman.

II.11 Even though the attendants know that pearls only come from the ocean, the image is so powerful that they are led to believe otherwise (*ākaram-abhramb-ani-(y)aṇḍrugāka-udadhi takkan puṭṭune muttĕmul*).

II.12 The silk textiles are described here as *nija-dvīpa* ('from their islands'), which may refer to maritime trade with Indonesia, or other seafaring regions of Southeast Asia, Africa or Europe.

II.14 Rāga Megharañjani and other seasonal monsoon *rāgas* are believed to summon rain clouds (cf. V.145, see my translation in *Awaaz*, South Asian Journal of Arts, Brown University, Spring 2009).

II.15 The gods are distinguished from mortals by their lack of perspiration, their feet not touching the ground and their unblinking eyes. Amarāvati is here referred to as *animiṣa paṭṭaṇambu* 'City of the Unblinking Gods' which is significant as it contrasts with Lakṣmi's playful eyes (*kannulu keḷiki*). Here the fluttering flags are her eyelids and the lotus-bud cupolas her eyes, which occasionally appear to shut (*mūyagā balĕn)*.

The women in this verse are also referred to as Lakṣmi. VVS 73 and TKR 104 offer reverse interpretations of the two terms *nija-lakṣmi* and *tadīya-lakṣmi*.

II.16 In Hindu astronomy the *sapta-ṛṣis* or Seven Sages form a constellation identical to Ursa Major, or the Big Dipper. Their wives are believed to be the constellation Kṛttika, or the Pleiades, who lovingly nursed the infant son of Śiva. For a rich description of these sages, see Canto VI, particularly verse VI.34, of Kāḷidāsa's *Kumārasaṁbhava* in Heifetz (1985) 82-87.

kāṭuka is usually produced from lamp soot (cf. I.6), but here the women allow lighting to strike and blacken their metal plates.

II.17 This is one the most complex metaphors in the text. The image is based on the old design of wooden South India homes. *madana cetulu* which can mean 'excited hands' is also an architectural term that applies to supportive posts or pillars made of wood. The *kuruñju* or braces for these posts extend up to the roof like fingers. The Madhura mansions are compared to Lakṣmi (*purī-gṛha-lakṣmi*) being led to her husband Viṣṇu whose feet are the sky (*viṣṇu-pada*). The rooftops are likened to the bride's friends, their *cīras* are the mansion flags and their whispering is compared to the pigeons that inhabit the rafters. The incense is not only sweet but dense so as to make the room dark, allowing couples to consummate their marriage. This beautiful metaphor foreshadows Goda's marriage to Raṅganātha in Chapter VI. My thanks to Professor P. Ramanarasimham for his insightful assistance with this verse.

II.19-23 These five poems describe the beautiful *puṣpa-lāvikalu* or city flower sellers. Verses II.19, II.21 and II.22 are composed in a very colloquial language that uses a high degree

of *double entendre* and sexual innuendo to describe the flirtatious dialogue between city men and the subtly provocative women. Here I have only translated verse II.20 which is fairly straightforward.

II.24 This fantastic *sīsa padyam* about the city's royal elephants has six lines that each end in the repetition of a non-finite verb (*cimmi cimmi*, *ta<u>r</u>imi ta<u>r</u>imi*, *sāci sāci*, *<u>r</u>uvvi <u>r</u>uvvi*, *vĕḍali vĕḍali* and *tirigi tirigi*). This gives the poem a very dynamic feeling which I have tried to recreate in English.

II.26 'thoroughbred stallions' is a translation of *ājāneyambulu* which TKR 116 glosses as *jātigala gu<u>rr</u>ālu*. He later adds that *ājāneyam* is a place in Africa.

Long ago, horses had wings and freely roamed the heavens. They upset Lord Indra who had the sage Śālihotra use a magical blade of *darbha* grass to sever their wings (cf. *Kumārasaṁbhava* I.20). Interestingly, Śālihotra is also the name of the father of Indian veterinary medicine. Among other texts, he wrote the *Aśva Āyurveda*, a treatise about equine care and health.

II.28 The Samāna Breath is one of the five vital airs or *vāyus* of the body. The various schools of yoga describe their location and function as follows:

Name	**Location**	**Function**
prāṇa	thorax	respiration
apāna	pelvis	excretion
samāna	abdomen	digestion
vyāna	whole body	circulation
udāna	head	expression

Vāyu is also the name of the God of Wind. Additionally, the poet is playing on the word *samāna* which can also mean equal or similar. Because the Samāna Breath is contained within the belly, it moves with the horses and outruns the Wind who is known for his incredible speed. Shame or disgrace is often described as blackness as in *kāḷima kārkŏnun*, literally 'blackness blackened' (cf. II.41).

II.29 These riders are twice humbled, first because they need two sets of stirrups to climb up onto the tall foreign horses, and second because they become frightened when the horses hunch down to quicken their stride. 'begin to crouch' has been added for clarity.

All the cities/countries named here are explicitly cited in the last *pāda* of the poem. I have not been able to identify *śaka-dhaṭṭa* or simply *dhaṭṭa* as noted by TKR 118.

II.30 This *sīsa padyam* uses the repeated question *sandiyamu kaladĕ*. The courtesans' black braids fall like bees settling on a lotus flower. Their waists are so thin there's nothing but sky to be seen (cf. Note II.57-59). Their eyes shine like fish (*mīnākṣi*) and their bodies are slender as vines. Compare the descriptions of these city courtesans to the *devadāsis* of Śrī Villiputtūr (cf. I.59).

II.31 The poem is based on a pun (*śleṣa)* on the word *vīṇa* which can mean either a lute, like the one that Nārada carries, or the musk pods taken from an antelope's navel. The sound of the *vīṇa* is black like bees and contrasts with the bright white body of the sage.

II.32 King Triśaṅku sought to reach heaven with his mortal body but ended up being suspended upside down in the atmosphere. Earlier he was cursed by the sons of Vaśiṣṭha to become a *caṇḍāla* or outcaste. 'defiles the sky' is used here for *niṅgi mātaṅga vāṭi ayyĕn*, which literally means 'the sky turned into an outcaste street'.

II.33 This poem along with the three that follow constitute a *catur-varṇa-varṇana*, or description of the four castes or *varṇas*. Giving is often described as flowing water (*dāna-dhāra,* cf. II.35, II.42). In this verse it is contrasted with the inner heat that these brahmans have accumulated within their bodies over a long period of time (*cirasamupāśritāgni main unikin*). 'dexterous' has been substituted for *vala-hastamu*, 'the right hand'.

II.34 'unite their hands in giving' is used for *aidu padi seyaru*, literally 'make five into ten' which TKR 123 glosses as *añjaliñcaru* or *dosili paṭṭaṭam*.

II.35 The merchants are wealthy because they are constantly acting justly, or according to *dharma* (*dharmaika nityārjanan saṁbhūtambagu*). Another part of *vaiśya dharma* is to make donations, which is again compared to a flow of water.

The poet seems to be making a subtle joke when he says that the million marker flags are covered by rain clouds (*ambhodāvaḷi kappa ketuvulu*).

II.36 The image in this poem seems to be based on the ancient Vedic notion that *śūdras* come from the feet of the sacrificial man (cf. Puruṣa Sūkta, Ṛg Veda 10.90). 'sustain the city' has been added.

II.37 This complex poem is based on *dohada-kriya*, the art of gardening and the specific technique whereby plants are pruned and trimmed so that they flower prematurely. The flowering trees in the verse feel as though they're being attacked by the girls, as well as the birds and bees that fly all around them like an army surrounding a fort.

II.38 Vāmana and Puṣpadanta are the *dig-gajas* of the South (*yāmya karikin*) and Northeast respectively. Snakes are believed to feed on air, and peacocks on snakes.

This verse beautifully summarizes the foregoing description of Madhura and seamlessly introduces the Pāṇḍya monarch.

THE KING

II.39 This verse along with the four that follow it are in praise of the Pāṇḍya king. Although not explicitly framed as such in the original, I have translated these verses in the manner of the royal panegyrics that were commonly sung by poets and bards in the Tamil courts.

The Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition identifies this king as King Vallabhadeva of the pre-Coḻa Pāṇḍyas. Nandakumar (1989) pinpoints the king as Ko Neḍumāraṉ (740-767 CE), a Jain convert to Śrī Vaiṣṇavism but this identification seems to be conflated with the famous Neḍumāraṉ who was converted to Śaivism by Sambandar. There is no clear consensus on this issue and scholarly research regarding Pāṇḍya dynastic lists are scant and often inconclusive.

The 'six traits of a mighty monarch' (*ṣāḍ-guṇyamu*) are skills related to *sandhi* (peacemaking), *vigraha* (war), *yāna* (invasion), *āsana* (patience), *dvaidhībhāva* (weighing pros and cons) and *samāśraya* (protection). The 'four modes of governance' (*dvi-dvaya-upāya*, literally 'the two pairs of means') are *sāma* (peaceful negotiation) and *dāna* (gift giving) which are considered *sātvika*; and *bheda* (sowing dissension amongst the enemy) and *daṇḍa* (punishment) which are *rājasika*. There is said to be a pair of *tāmasika* means but this king apparently never resorts to them.

kankādri mudraṇa grantha-karta is a line of interest. VVS 91 identifies the Golden Mountain with Mount Meru, where the king engraved (VVS 92 *likhiñcinavāḍu*) or proclaimed (TKR 129 *prakaṭiñcukunnavāḍu*) his fame. The story is based on a legend that I have not been able to trace.

Lord of Lanka (*laṅkeśa*) is identified by both VVS 92 and TKR 129 as Vibhīṣaṇa, but I believe this maybe a reference to a historical Sinhalese king. The Copper River (Tāmraparṇi) is the traditional boundary between the Tamil and Siṅhala countries.

The Pāṇḍya kings appear to have been staunch Śaivites until their conversion to Vaiṣṇavism during the time of Yāmunācarya. 'army of ghosts' is the sound play *bhūta-bhūtātta* and relates to Śiva as the leader of the *gaṇas*, an army of ghastly demigods.

II.40 According to TKR 130 this verse is autobiographical.

II.41 This complex poem is based on multiple puns. *ahi* meaning 'snake' refers to the snakes that are known to wrap themselves around sandalwood trees, but *ahi* also means 'enemy' and here *ahi-bhayam* is the fear of treason. The seven kinds of *ahi-bhayam* are caused by: one's own army (*daṇḍu*), friends (*mitrulu*), courtiers (*āśritulu*), relatives (*saṁbandhulu*), acquaintances (*kāryasamudbhavulu*), attendants (*bhṛtyulu*) or servants (*upacāramu ceyuvāru*). I have added explanatory phrases to the translation in order to make clear this double meaning.

Añjana is the guardian elephant of the West or *paḍamaṭi* (from Tel *paḍamara* = *paḍum* (falling) + *iṭāyiru* (sun), see Brown 429). His consort is Añjanavati, sometimes known as Tāmraparṇi, which is also the name of a river and it's surrounding areas. The word *añjana* is also another term for *kāṭuka* or collyrium which is black like shame or disgrace (cf. II.28). Although it would be wrong to love a married woman, there appears to be no fault here as indicated by the term *an-añjanata*.

The extended metaphor about attacking elephants is most likely autobiographical (TKR 131) as Śrī Kṛṣṇadevarāya is known to have killed many enemy elephants by dealing death blows to their heads.

II.42 The two wings of the royal swan are compared to the two kinds of giving *viz. dānam* and *tyāgam*. Gifts can be ceremonial and religious when presented with water and the recitation of mantras, or informal when offered out of compassion, in which case water is not needed. My thanks to Dr. Ramavarapu Sharat Babu for his assistance with this verse and the previous verse.

II.43 There are said to be six plagues or *īti bādhalu*: excessive rain (*ativṛṣṭi*), drought (*anāvṛṣṭi*), rats (*ĕlukalu*), parrots (*cilukalu*), locusts (*miḍatalu*) and invasion from neighbouring kings (*ceruva-rājulu).*

The parrots are bound with necklaces (*gŏlusulace nibaddamai*) and kept as pets in the houses of courtesans (*vārāṅganāgāra*).

In those days, kings wore victory anklets (*gaṇḍa pĕṇḍeramulu)* that were engraved with the likenesses of defeated rival kings. Therefore, whenever the king would move, his enemies would noisily rub up against each other (*krandugān itaretarambu rāyiḍi seyu*).

THE SUMMER

II.45 Trumpet flowers (Skt *pāṭala*, Tel *kaligŏṭṭu*) and silk-cotton trees (Skt *śālmalī*, Tel *būrugu*) are markers of the summer season. I have not translated *bhāgdheyamu* (TKR 136 *adṛṣṭamu ayinaṭṭi*) which seems to suggest the animistic worship of trees, still commonly practised throughout India.

II.46 Here Kāla Bhairava is *kṣetra-pāluḍu*, a guardian of the land. As a manifestation of Śiva *kāla* can mean either time or blackness. The dry barren rocks make the entire land into a *cākirevu*, a place to wash clothes. Even today, washer men and women clean clothes by beating them on flat rocks.

II.47 The ancient Vedic god Varuṇa (*śaradhi-pa*, Lord of the Sea) is invoked here as a precursor to the creator god Brahma. This usage could be a subtle reference to the Matysa *avatāra* when Vishnu became a fish and warned King Manu about the coming of a great flood. He instructed Manu, in a fashion similar to the Biblical story of Noah, to save the world by constructing a boat and loading it with various plants and animals.

II.49 In Hindu mythology the sun is anthropomorphized as the god Sūrya who rides across the sky in a chariot drawn by seven horses. His charioteer is the legless Anūru who is referred to here in Telugu as *piccukuṇṭu*, one who hops like a sparrow, *i.e.* a cripple (Brown 462). The chariot reins are made of snakes and are deprived of food because the West Wind (*paḍamara vĕṭṭa*) is too hot to eat.

The poetic device used here is known as *hetu alaṅkāra* or 'embellishment based on causality'.

II.51-52 These poems are based on the notion that the sea (*abdhi-rāṭ*) is the husband of the river maidens (*vāhinī-taruṇulu*), and that the monsoon rains function like their love messenger (*ĕḍakāḍu*, a pimp, or literally 'a go-between'. 'move along dry river beds' has been added for clarity. 'God of Clouds' is *parjanyuḍu*, an epithet of Indra.

II.53 This detailed poem written in the long Sīsa meter paints a beautiful tableau of summer flora and fauna. In the hands of this master poet, the lotus, which is most often the object of comparison (*upamāna),* is turned into the subject of comparison (*upameya*). Clumps of lotus vines (*tammi-gumpulan*) are likened to a field of tubers (*cema maḍivoni),* see TKR 144.

The *uluca* fish mentioned in this verse is glossed by TKR 143 as *cinna cepalu,* or 'little fish', but both Brown and Gwynn define it as *hilsa*, a fairly large fish common to the Bay of Bengal.

The rather fantastic description of alligators diving into wells is unique. Although not seen today, TKR 144 explains that this was a likely sight for farmers in the Rāyalasīma region of southern Andhra.

'water-eel' is a translation of *malugu mīn*, sometimes called *mulugu pāmu*, or snake fish.

II.54 Compare the tasty *bŏmmiḍāya*, the great loach or tobaccopipe fish, to the water-eel cited in verse II.53. 'bony fish' are *ḍātkūṭa*, a type of bitter fish (Brown 303) glossed by TKR 145 as *mullu cepalu* or fish with many bones.

II.55 One long Sanskrit compound creates the sonic effect of splashing water: *kumbhombhanodbhūtāmbudhvani = kumbha + umbhana + udbhūta + ambu + dhvani*, literally 'the sound of water when pots are raised and dropped'. This sound then 'becomes an instrument' (*vādyamai)* to accompany *prodgīta geyālu*, boisterous folk songs.

andhu-yantra nati-kṛt is an interesting description of the mechanism used at village wells. *yantra* is glossed by both VVS 103 and TKR 146 as *etamulu* which Brown describes as a water lift based on the principle of a see-saw. *nati* is taken by VVS 103 as *vaṅguṭanu*, based directly on the Sanskrit meaning of bending or stooping, while TKR 146 adds *kālito krindaku trŏkkevāriceta*, literally 'by means of a man who pushes down with his foot'.

II.57-59 These three poems about the women at roadside water stalls (*prapā-prapālikalu)* have been combined due to repetitive imagery. The Yamuna and Gaṅga are thought to be black and white respectively.

For a detailed analysis of II.59, see NRS 40-42. Also compare the image of pouring water to the subtler *Gāthā-sapta-śati* 161 in Mehrotra's *The Absent Traveller* (2008)-

As the traveller, eyes raised,
Cupped hands filled with water, spreads
His fingers and lets it run through,
She pouring it reduces the trickle.

II.60 'white nightingales' are *vĕnnĕla cakora*. The Sanskrit *cakora* is variously translated as bartavelle, Greek partridge, turtledove or nightingale. In Telugu *vĕnnĕla-piṭṭa* or *vĕnnĕla-pulugu* is a nocturnal bird that basks in moonlight and feeds on moonbeams (Brown 729). 'pouring a round flat pancake' is *cāpaṭṭu posinaṭṭu*.

II.61 'coconut liquor' is *nārikeḷa savapu*.

II.63 The summer moon is mentioned here as *oṣadhi-pāluna*, the Lord of Plants. During this time of the year, the moon is less than vibrant and is comparable to the tired faces of the female lovers. For 'powerless God of Love' (*tīlagu kantu*), see Note II.65.

II.64 *indrajālam* (Tel *kanukaṭṭu vidya*) is juggling, conjuring, or sleight of hand. TKR suggests that magicians in those days performed tricks (*kṛtrima-gatin*) by using peacock feathers (*mayūra-piñchikā*) as a sort of magic wand.

II.65 The Hindu God of Love, much like the Roman Cupid, uses a bow and arrow to strike passion into lovers. His weapons are a sugarcane bow (*cĕṟaku vilu*) and flower-tipped arrows (*puṣpa-bāṇālu*). The height of summer is the planting season for sugarcane, but also a time when lovemaking is less common (cf. II.63).

II.66 Women's breasts are often compared to *cakravāka* birds, but here they become well-trained decoy birds (*dīmulai*) and attract well-water with their natural coolness (*śaityam*).

II.67 Both jasmine buds and trumpet flowers appear in the summer. Poison (*nābhiyun*) and its antidote (*nir-viṣambu*, *i.e. amṛtam*) were simultaneously formed during the Churning of the Milky Ocean. Their opposing qualities (*verpaḍa guṇambulu*) are compared to rain and drought.

II.69 *caluva capparamulu* are canopied rest stops, specially arranged for feudatory lords *en route* to the capital. The poem is based on the proverb- *kumpaṭi-lo tāmara*, 'like a lotus in a furnace', or as is common in English, 'an oasis in the desert'.

II.70 This wonderful description of life and nature closes the description of the summer season. Notice how this entire section is bookended with monsoon forecasts (cf. II.45).

THE KING'S CONTEST

II.71-72 I have combined these two *kanda padyams* because they flow together as a single narrative. Verse II.71 ends with *bhaktin* 'with devotion' and II.72 begins with *seviñci* 'worshipped'. In extended narrative passages, the poet often links together multiple poems written in the faster paced Telugu meters. For a good example of this technique, see *Khāṇḍikya Keśidhvaja Saṁvādam* in Chapter 3 (not translated here).

Vṛṣagiri refers to the Aḷaghar Kovĕl located about 15 miles northwest of Madurai at the foot of the Aḷaghar Hills. The deity here is Sundara Bāhuvu Svāmi 'The God with Beautiful Arms', and is praised in verse by many Āḻvār saints (TKR 159). The famous Boat Festival (*tĕppa tirunāḷḷu*) held in *āṣāḍha-māsam*, corresponding to June or July, falls at the end of the Indian summer.

II.73 Another fantastic gastronomic list that includes some unique items such as the *karpūra cakkĕrakeḷi*, a type of banana known for its camphor-like fragrance (*surabhi rambhā-phalambulu*), and the special *rasadāḍi* banana that satisfies by cooling (*tanupāru* = *tanupu* + *āru)*. The word *toḍa* ('with', or 'in addition to') is repeated a whopping eight times and I have tried to translate this sense of pleasant gluttony with fast-paced rhythms.

The Sanskrit word for guest is *atithi*, which is '*a*' (the negative prefix) + *'tithi'* ('a specified date'). Therefore an *atithi* is one who arrives unexpectedly. In India, one's guest is treated like a god, as in the famous Upaniṣādic saying *atithi devo bhava*.

II.74 *Ārya* is a Sanskrit meter based on *mātrās* (beats) rather than *akṣaras* (syllables). Some scholars believe this meter could have originated in South India (see Hart 1975, and Reddy 2005). In this verse, *gīta* could apply to other *mātrā*-based meters in either Sanskrit or Telugu, as in Upagīti or Teṭagīti for example, but I have translated it as 'song'. TKR 162 glosses it as *vedānta-gītālu* and VVS 114 adds *ślokālu*. 'pithy proverbs' are *subhāṣitambulu*.

II.75 A rich description of the king in royal attire, *cĕṅgāvi daśa malañcina* is an unclear phrase. The commentators have offered various readings and interpretations but taking *daśa* as *dasilī*, I have used 'red silk sash'. The word for courtesan in this verse is *bhoginī* or 'lover'.

II.76 The phrase *purohita dharma* is 'behaviour helpful for the future,' but can also be read as 'priestly conduct'. *ātma kīlkŏnan* is 'pierced the king's soul'. Although I have rearranged some of the interpretations here, the essential meaning has been preserved.

II.77 A string of short non-finite verbs create the staccato like rhythm in this fast-paced *kanda padyam*. 'self-perpetuated delusions' is *tana mosamunakun*, glossed by TKR 166 as *tanaku tānai cesukunna ātma-vañcanaku*, literally 'his own frauds that he alone committed against himself'.

II.78 In Hindu genesis mythology, Manu is the first man (*prabhṛtulu*). The God of Death is referred to here as Kāluḍu, an epithet based on his embodiment of time or *kāla* (cf. 'Time' as *kālamu* in II.79 and II.80).

II.80 This verse in the Campakamāla meter is a list of 22 famous kings. The first six are known as the Six Universal Monarchs (*ṣaṭ-cakravartulu*) and the following 16 are the Sixteen Great Kings (*ṣodaśa-mahārājulu*). A description of these great kings appears in the Śānti Parvan of the

Āndhra Mahābhāratamu where the master poet Tikkana composes 16 long Sīsa poems for each ruler. The context there is Lord Kṛṣṇa's consolation of King Yuddhiṣṭhira who is lamenting the death of slain kings (TKR 168).

II.82 *dharma* (morality), *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (love) are the three original *puruṣārthas* or 'pursuits of man', here referred to as *varga-traya*, 'the three types'. *mokṣa* or salvation seems to have been added as the fourth and ultimate goal when this formulation was later connected to the *catur-āśrama* ('four stage of life') *viz. bramhacāri* (student), *gṛhastha* (house-holder), *vānaprasthi* (forest-dweller) and *sannyāsi* (renunciant).

II.83-84 'alone' and 'in the morning' have been added to these two *asampūrṇa* ('incomplete') Kanda verses that flow together as one (cf. II.71-72). The king's impatience seems to be expressed by this narrative momentum (TKR 170).

II.85 *bīra-puvvulu* are the flowers of the *bīra-kāya* plant, a type of South Indian squash with bright reddish yellow blossoms. 'Truth' here is *tattvambu*, literally 'thatness'.

II.86 Hara is Śiva and Hari is Viṣṇu. Uma is the goddess Pārvati, consort of Lord Śiva and mother of Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed god (*kari-mukhuḍu*).

II.87 The *aṣṭākṣara* mantra (cf. Note I.77) is here referred to as the *mūla-mantramu* or 'root mantra'. Śrī Mannāru Svāmi is the local name of Viṣṇu in Śrī Villiputtūr. He is worshipped in his form as Vaṭapatraśāyi, literally 'the One Who Sleeps on a Fig Leaf'. During the intermittent periods between aeons, a baby Viṣṇu is believed to rest on a fig leaf, gently floating atop the primordial waters of creation.

II.88 The word for 'assembly hall' is the Persian loan word *dīvān* (Tel *divāṇamu*). *prelĕḍu durmada andhulu* is literally 'blabbering egotistical blind men', and 'disgusted with this world' is *ihamu rosināḍu*, literally 'abhorring this'.

II.89 'tremble' is actually the phrase *vaḍa-vaḍa vaḍaki* which is to shake violently or rapidly. I have tried to translate this feeling across the whole poem with quick rhythmic phraseology.

II.90 This incredibly sonic verse employs a blast of harsh gutturals (cf. IV.28)- *kṣamā khanana kriyā khara khanitra grāhita udyat kiṇa stoma asnigdha karu*, literally 'earth dig work hard spade holding because of calluses mass rough hands'. Later in the verse, a repeated use of the aspirated labial '*bh*' mellows the effect but preserves the tonal intensity. *bhavat bhavana dāsu* 'your temple servant', and *bhūmī bhṛt sabha* 'the king's court'. TKR suggests that the second phrase is a reference to god as king of the world (see below).

'How could I disgrace you?' is *ayaśambu mīku kākuṇḍune*, literally 'Won't the ill-fame be yours?' This entire poem is based on the Vaiṣṇava belief that we are all servants of god, and that all our actions, good or bad, are absorbed into the Lord. This concept known as the Vaiṣṇava *rahasyam* (secret) is expanded in the *Bhagavad Gīta* and plays a critical role in understanding the connection between *karma* and *bhakti*. (see TKR 174-75).

II.91 Professor P. Ramanarasimham interprets the last line *lerĕ itaralu nī līlakun pātramul* as 'Isn't there someone better suited for you to play with?' VVS 122 and TKR 175 agree that

pātramulu are *taginavāru*, those who are fit or qualified, but TKR offers a secondary gloss of *veṣa-dhārulu*, those who wear costumes, *i.e.* actors.

Ironically, the humble gardener's plea is filled with a long list of Sanskrit compounds (cf. I.84). All of these words, however, are appended with the earthy Telugu suffix '*o*' that has the meaning of 'or' or 'rather'.

II.92 Śrīdevi is another name for Lakṣmi. She is always seen in the company of Lord Viṣṇu (cf. I.1, I.20).

II.96-97 'solitary sages' are *ekāṅgulu*, as opposed to 'both sects of Vaiṣṇavas' who are *sāttinas* and *sāttanis*. The former group keeps a lock of hair after tonsuring, while members of the latter do not. 'versed in the dos and don'ts of religious life' is *vidhi niṣedhamulu eṟigi*.

Like the close of Chapter I, this section also ends with a tasty menu prepared by Viṣṇucitta's wife. 'seasoned mixture made with equal parts of cumin-spiced jaggery and tangy tamarind' is *cĕṟakaḍamu sābālu ūnpa cĕlagu sambārampu cintapaṇḍu*. Here I read *sambāram* (from Skt *sambhāra*) as 'a mixture of spices for seasoning' (Brown 770), possibly for flavouring the rice to make a sweet and sour rice preparation (a medieval variant on the South India favourite *pulihora* or tamarind rice?). For a different interpretation see NRS 42. Regarding 'sweet rice cakes', see Note I.81.

CHAPTER III

THE DEBATE

III.1 This invocatory poem elegantly contrasts the compassionate and wrathful forms of Lord Viṣṇu. In his Boar (*varāha*) *avatāra,* he killed the demon Hiraṇyākṣa who stole the Earth and hid her at the bottom of the Cosmic Ocean (cf. IV.21). The 'Demon Ox' is *danuja ukṣa*, otherwise known as Vṛṣabhāsura. This demon is mentioned in two separate mythological accounts– in the *Bhāgavatam* he is slain by Kṛṣṇa, but in the *Vĕṅkaṭācala Māhātmyamu* he is killed in a duel with Lord Viṣṇu himself. The location of his defeat became known as Vṛṣabhādri, the Ox Hill, in the Vĕṅkaṭa range (cf. IV.1). 'gentle glance of grace' is *kṛpā vīkṣa ādṛta*.

This poem in pure Sanskrit contains a repeated use of the conjunct consonant '*kṣa*'.

III.3 'without even informing the king', *vijñapti leka* implies that several debaters had entered the palace, so many that the king didn't need to be informed about every single arrival. 'he had a special glow about him' is *ati ūrjasvaluḍu auṭa*, and 'his whole being was pervaded with the glory of God' is *hari tana ceto-gati ŏlayun*, a line borrowed from the following poem III.4.

As his name rightly suggests, Lord Viṣṇu has entered Viṣṇucitta's mind, and the erudite exposition that follows must be viewed as the Lord speaking through his humble servant. Even Viṣṇucitta's mannerisms, like the 'chuckle' (*nagavu)* are uncharacteristic of the pious brahman. Also note his sarcastic tone in 'please, please continue the deliberations' in III.4, and 'we might discuss a few things' *emu kŏnni nuḍivĕdamu* in III.5, or the sardonic rhetorical question in III.7 'What was it that you said?' *nīvu emi aṇṭivi*.

III.5 'impartial intermediary' is *mādhya-sthyamunan*, literally 'standing in the middle'.

III.6-7 These verses have been combined for narrative clarity. *śruti* are 'heard' or revealed scriptures, *i.e.* the Vedas; *smṛti* are 'remembered' texts and refer to *śāstric* or scientific texts composed by individuals, in this case most likely the *Dharma-śāstras* (TKR 187); and *sūtras* are gnomic phrases linked together like a 'thread', here referring to the authoritative *Brahma Sūtras* quoted in verse III.8.

III.8 This highly technical verse is a means for the poet to exhibit his knowledge of scripture and doctrine. And although some scholars have minimized the validity of the poet's philosophical knowledge, this verse makes clear that Kṛṣṇadevarāya had a firm grounding in Vedāntic thought. Various schools of Indian philosophy (cf. I.78) including Sāṁkhyans (*aśabda-vādi*), Advaitins (*māyā-vivādi*), Pūrva-Mīmāṁsans (*apūrva-vādi*), Vaiśeṣikas (*pīlu-vādi*), Buddhists (*sougata-vivādi*) and Cārvākas (*pratyakṣa-vādi*) are countered with pointed references from the *Brahma Sūtras* and Upaniṣads. The Telugu verse appears below followed by an analysis of the doctrinal arguments presented therein.

"jagat-udgatikini bījamu pradhānam" anin ***ī-***
    kṣatyādi *vīśun aśabda-vādin*
pŏrin "īśunḍen" anā ***bhogamātretyādi*** *u-*
    dāhṛti sphūrti māyā-vivādi
"phaliyiñcun kriyayu" nā ***phalamatayityādi***
    sarveśun kŏnani apūrva-vādi

śāstrayonitvādi *"saraṇin īśvarunin tĕ-*
lpĕḍun anumānam" an pīlu-vādi

nityulandu ĕlla nityunḍu *an śrutyurūkti*
"kṣaṇika sarva??? t īṣi" sougata-vivādin
anupapatterna *yanu sūtram ādiyaina*
vāṇi "nṛpatīśun" pratyakṣa-vādi gĕlicĕ

1.1.5 *īkṣater nāśabdam*

Due to seeing [nature] as not based on scripture, it is not [the cause]

This verse "suggests by various arguments that the cause of the world is conscious reality and cannot be identified with the non-conscious *pradhāna* or matter as the *Sāṁkhya* system holds." (Radhakrishnan 1960: 251)

4.4.21 *bhoga-mātra-sāmya-liṅgāc ca*

And due to the indications of equality [of the liberated soul with God] only in regard to enjoyment

B.S.IV.4.17-21 describe the limited powers of liberated souls in contrast to the omnipotence of Īśvara. B.S. IV.4.17 clearly states that liberated souls have all the powers of Īśvara except for those relating to the world such as creation, preservation and dissolution (*jagad-vyāpāra-varjam*); thereby negating the equality of even a liberated soul to God.

3.2.38 *phalam ata upapatteḥ*

The fruits are from Him, because that is logical

B.S. III.2.38-41 are clear on the position that the results of actions come directly from God and not from the actions themselves. This is in direct contradiction to Jaimini's injunction to perform sacrifices to attain heaven (*svarga-kāmo yajeta*), a view that falsely imbues the rites with their own effectual potency. In B.S. III.2.41 there is a direct refutation of the Pūrva-Mīmāṁsa stance by Bādarāyaṇa.

1.1.3 *śāstrayonitvāt*

Because [Brahman] is the source of scripture

Because scripture is the source of [knowledge of Brahman]

BS I.1.3 can be interpreted in two ways and Kṛṣṇadevarāya seems to be invoking the latter reading. The Vaiśeṣikas believe, as is implied in the previous sūtra BS I.1.2, that knowledge of *Brahman* can be inferred from perceiving the natural world. BS I.1.3 argues that "scripture is the means of right knowledge through which we understand the nature of *Brahman*." (Radhakrishnan 1960: 241). As Radhakrishnan explains, Rāmanujan uneqivocally "repudiates the idea of inferring the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent God from the nature of the world. He holds that the reality of God cannot be known through any means of proof such as perception and inference. He is known only through scriptural evidence." (Radhakrishnan 1960: 244).

1.2.3 *anupapattes tu na śārīraḥ*

But the [qualities of Brahman] do not belong to the embodied being

As Radhakrishnan explains: "The qualities of 'consisting of mind' and so on are applicable only to Brahman and not the individual soul." The Cārvāka or Lokāyata school, classified as a

heterodox or *nāstika* philosophy, takes a starkly materialistic (and anti-caste oriented) view of life and would very well have made a statement on par with Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *nṛpatīśun* which equates a king to God.

'"God is everlasting in all things"' is the Telugu paraphrase *nityulu andu ĕlla nityuḍu* of a statement found in *Kaṭhopaniṣad* V.13. A full citation and translation have been given here but the principle idea is *nityo 'nityānam* or "the eternal among non-eternals."

nityo' nityānāṁ cetanaścetanānām
eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān
tamātmastham ye'nupaśyanti dhīrā
steṣām śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣām
Kaṭhopaniṣad V.13

It is the eternal among non-eternals,
the consciousness within consciousness.
The one that fulfils the desires of many.

The wise experience it
as existing within the self
and feel eternal peace
like no others.

III.9 Dvaipāyana, 'The Island Born', is another name of the ancient sage Vyāsa who is attributed with the authorship of many texts including the *Brahma Sūtras*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavatam.*

'God' *īśu* and 'Truth' *tattva* are equated in this context. The phrase 'everlasting bliss of consciousness' is *sukha saṁvit tattva*, very similar to the often quoted *sat-cit-ānanda*. 'God Viṣṇu' is actually *viṣṇutvam*, literally 'Viṣṇu-ness'.

Viśiṣṭa Advaita is the school of 'Qualified Non-Dualiam' founded by the renowned 11th century South Indian Vaiṣṇava philosopher Rāmānuja. Śrī Kṛṣṇadevarāya was a staunch follower of this philosophy as it was closely associated with the development of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava faith. The other major schools in this group are the Advaita 'Non-Dualism' of Śaṅkara and the Dvaita 'Dualism' of Madhva.

III.10 'Oneness' is *ekākita*. 'both sentient and non-sentient beings' is *cit dvayambu*. Śiva has three eyes because of his extra yogic eye; Brahma has eight eyes due to his four heads; and Indra has a thousand eyes because he was cursed by the sage Gautama.

The beginning of this poem greatly resembles the famous *Nāsadīya Sūkta* (*Ṛg Veda* 10.129) which begins *na asat*, or 'not non-existence'.

III.11 The first part of this verse is described in *Vedārtha Saṅgraham*, Rāmānuja's exegesis on the Upaniṣads, and is further evidence of the poet's familiarity with Viśiṣṭa Advaita (TKR 193).

'miraculous attributes' are *guṇa-bhūtulu*, glossed by VVS 146 and TKR 192 as *aiśvaryamulu*, the eight supernatural powers, *viz.* the ability to become small (*aṇima*), become big (*mahima*), become light (*laghima*), become heavy (*garima*), obtain anything (*prāptiḥ*), do

anything (*prākāmyam*), control others (*īśatvam),* and control one's own senses (*vaśitvam*). 'Form beyond forms' is *svarūpa-rūpa*.

'The Aruṇa Section' refers to a portion of the *Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad* in which the sage Uddālaka Aruṇi instructs his son Śvetaketu about the nature of reality. He is well known for the famous *mahāvākyam* or 'great saying'- *tat tvam asi*, literally 'that you are.'

III.12 The full citation is from *Subāla Upaniṣad* 7.1:

eṣa sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā
apahatapāpmā-divyodeva eko nārāyaṇaḥ

He is the soul inside all beings.
He is without sin, the one divine god Nārāyaṇa.

'only the one Nārāyaṇa' is actually *nārāyaṇa padame*, literally 'only the word *nārāyaṇa*', which reinforces the more abstract concept, already introduced in the previous verse, that God, or in essence the universe, is *śabda* (word or sound), a principle sometimes referred to as *nāda-brahma*.

III.13 I have edited out part of this long *vacanam*. There are several obscure references to various mytho-philosophical stories that detract from the flow of the passage, and only serve to highlight the poet's depth of Vedāntic arcana.

The 'bodies' of Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa are referred to as *śarīrambulu*. For *dharma, artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa,* see Note II.82. 'permanent connection between God and our consciousness' is *īśvarunaku cetasunaku nitya-sambandham*. 'everyone's ultimate refuge' is *samastambunaku parāyaṇambu*, glossed by TKR 196 as *paramāśrayam*.

CHAPTER IV

VIṢṆUCITTA'S VICTORY

IV.1 Another poem in pure Sanskrit that describes the multifaceted image of Lord Viṣṇu (cf. Note III.1). The arrogant *asura* Naraka defeated the *devas*, occupied their capital Amarāvati and perpetuated many evils upon the women of heaven, imprisoning 16,000 of them and stealing the earrings of Aditi, the celestial mother of the gods. Naraka was finally slain by Viṣṇu during his Kṛṣṇa *avatāra*. Śrīnivāsa is literally 'the abode of Śrī'.

IV.3 This poem begins with *balimin trĕmpagan polĕn*, 'as if broken by a force/power', reinforcing the suggested presence of Lord Viṣṇu. The phrase 'broke every string' is *bhaṅgambugā kala nūlu ellan*, possibly a subtle pun based on the Tamil word *nūl* which can also mean 'book'. The onomatopoeic word *puṭukku* is used to describe the snapping string.

IV.4 'multi-colored garland for the Goddess of the Earth' is *gotra citra mālyambu*, a beautiful foreshadowing of Goda Devi's appearance.

IV.5 'the truth revealed in the Vedas, the Truth of Viṣṇu' is *veda-vedyam-aina viṣṇu-tattvam*. 'immersed. . . in the waters' is based on the verb *olalāḍu*, or in this case the causative *olalārcu* meaning to make someone bathe or play in water. A. K. Ramanujan cites the Tamil verbal root *āḻ* 'to immerse or dive' as the etymological base of the word Āḻvār (see Ramanujan *Hymns for the Drowning*, ix).

IV.6 The gods (*vibudhambulu*), saints (*siddhalu*) and departed souls (*kavyāhāra*, i.e. 'those who feed on the oblations made to ancestral spirits') use the following interjections respectively- *addhā*, *āha* and *aho*. The celestial musicians (*kinnaralu*) and demigods (*vidyādharalu*) speak in pure Sanskrit.

'"This Age of Darkness has turned into a Golden Age!"' *kṛtatām gataḥ kaliḥ* is based on the cosmological division of time into four *yugas* or aeons- Kṛta (or Satya), Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali which last for successively shorter periods of time and correspond to the physical and moral deterioration of the world.

IV.7-8 These two poems have been combined for chronological clarity. The end of verse IV.8 has been shifted to the beginning of IV.9.

'partial to that slave' is *pakṣa-pātamu ā dāsariki*. A Viṣṇu *bhakta* is often referred to as a servant of god, but these ousted scholars use the term *dāsari* (slave) as a word of insult. 'distanced himself from discernment' is a rather literal translation of *vimarśa dūram-aina*.

IV.10 The description of Garuḍa's purple wings offers an interesting description of medieval dyeing techniques. A cloth of double-weave (*rĕṇṭĕmu*, TKR 263 *jaṇṭa-neta vastramu*) is dipped (*taḍipi ettu*, literally 'soaked and raised') in vats of water, colored with *iṅgilikam* (Skt *hiṅgulam* meaning vermillion or cinnabar) and *kasīsam*, glossed by TKR 263 as *mailu-tuttam* or blue vitriol.

The Milky Ocean is an important geo-mythical component of Hindu cosmology. There are believed to be six other types of oceans composed of saltwater, curd, *ghī*, sugarcane juice, liquor and sweetwater.

Garuḍa is referred to here as *khaga-rāja* as well as *pĕn-tiru-(v)aḍi,* a Tamil epithet meaning 'the Great Holy Servant' (Periya Tiruvaḍi) as opposed to Hanumān who is known as 'the Lesser Holy Servant' (Siriya Tiruvaḍi).

IV.11 Compare this fantastic appearance of Lord Viṣṇu to the poet's own visionary experience in verse I.12.

The Wish-Fulfilling Tree is the famous *kalpa-vṛkṣam* of heaven. Jewels are Lakṣmi's playmates (TKR 265 *cĕlikattelu*) because they all come from the ocean (cf. I.55). The actual phrase used here is *puṭṭiṇṭi nĕccĕlulu*, or 'dear friends from her birth home', given as an *araṇam* or wedding gift from father-in-law to son-in-law, in this case from the Ocean to Viṣṇu.

IV.12 The parasol or umbrella (Skt *chatra*, Tel *gŏḍugu*) is an important symbol of Indian kingship (cf. I.18) and the gods close them out of respect for their king.

IV.13 Another example of precise imagery based on common village activities, in this case the post-harvest beating of grain stalks. *kaḷḷam* is the designated place for this work (i.e. a threshing floor), *śūrpa* (Tel *ceṭa*) is the fan used to blow away the chaff, and *pŏlla-kaṭṭu* are the pithless or blasted grains. Garuḍa is the Snake-Eater *ahi-bhuk*.

IV.14 *sāma-gānam* are songs from the Sāma Veda, a collection of hymns known for song-like recitation. It is one of the three original Vedas along with the Ṛg and Yajur.

IV.16 This song-like poem is written in the rhythmically repetitive Kavirāja Virājitam meter of 23 syllables. It is described with *trika gaṇas* as na-ja-ja-ja-ja-ja-ja-va. This analysis belies the underlying rhythmic structure of this verse which is parsed more like na-la-bha-bha-bha-bha-bha-ha-va, making it appear like a Telugu meter composed of six Indra *gaṇas* and two Sūrya *gaṇas*. An example will clarify:

> *jaya jaya dānava dāraṇa kāraṇa śarṅga rathāṅga gadāsidharā*
> ∪ ∪ ∪' ∪ — ∪'∪ — ∪'∪ — ∪'∪ — ∪'∪ — ∪'∪ — ∪'∪ —
> ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪' — ∪∪' — ∪∪' — ∪∪' — ∪∪' — ∪∪' — ∪'∪ —

For more information on the possible South Indian origin of certain *vṛtta* meters see Reddy 2005.

jaya is an exclamatory interjection meaning 'Hail!' or 'Victory!' and the phrase *jaya jaya* begins each *pāda* of this praise poem. An almost identical version of this verse appears in Allasāni Pĕddana's *Manu Caritramu*.

The River Gaṅga is believed to carry the consecrated waters from the feet of Lord Viṣnu and is also known as Viṣṇupadi. Today people visit the town of Haridwar, literally 'the Gateway to Viṣṇu', the sacred spot where the Gaṅga reaches the plains of North India.

VVS 197 and TKR 268 offer an interesting etymological derivation for the epithet Keśava which usually refers to Kṛsna with beautiful hair. *keśava* = *kaḥ* (Brahma) + *īśa* (Śiva) + *va* (origin?) which translates to Viṣṇu as the father of both Brahma and Śiva. The Yādava Śūra is Kṛṣṇa's grandfather.

IV.17 The following 15 poems are in reference to Viṣṇu's 'descents'. The word *avatāra* is often translated as 'incarnation', literally 'to enter the flesh', but the true etymology is from the prefix '*ava'* + the root '*tṛ*' which means to 'cross down' or 'descend'. The traditional number of descents is ten (*daśāvatāra*), but this list often varies in both number and character. The ninth *avatāra* is the most variable, usually Balarāma but in later lists often the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. Here the poet pays homage to both, technically taking the number to eleven. There are however countless other *purāṇic* and regional forms of Viṣṇu, like the central deity of this work for example, the god Śrī Vĕṅkaṭeśvara at Tirupati.

I have used the capitalized 'You' and 'He' to reflect the heavy use of the honorific plural form of Sanskrit pronouns such as *aṣmat* and *yuṣmat* that appear frequently throughout these verses.

The first three poems in this section are about the *matysa avatāra* or descent as a giant fish (cf. Note II.47). There are various readings of this rather ancient myth, but here the source seems to be the *Bhāgavatam.*

The *asura* is referred to as *divija-dveṣi*, a hater or enemy of the gods. TKR 269 and NRS 180 identify him as the demon Somaka, but VVS 198 cites Hayagrīva. Here Brahma is *vedha* and his *bhavanambu* ('abode') is Satya Loka, ‘the Land of Truth’.

Interestingly, the ‘letters’ here are described as *caukapu* (TKR 269 *caturasramaina*) or 'squarish', and most definitely apply to the Devanāgari *lipi* (script) of the Vedas as opposed to the circular letters of the Telugu syllabary.

IV.18 ‘Murāntaka’ is an epithet of Kṛṣṇa as the killer, or 'ender' of the demon Mura. ‘waters at the End of Time’ is *yugānta-vāri*. ‘victory drum’ is *jaya-dundubhin*.

IV.19 This poem seems to be based in part on the Hindu political theory of *matsya-nyāya* or the Law of Fishes, very akin to the English 'the big fish eats the little fish'.

‘grew bigger and bigger’ is *edhanaidhanai* and ‘smaller and smaller’ is *alpatālpatan*.

IV.20 Viṣṇu transformed into a giant tortoise (*kamaṭha-svāmi*) in order to hold up Mount Mandara which was used as a churning rod when the *devas* and *asuras* churned the Ocean of Milk. This poem is based on a similar image found in the *Manu Caritramu*.

IV.21 As Varāha the boar (cf. III.1), Viṣṇu rescued Mother Earth from the bottom of the ocean. ‘Cosmic Egg’ is *ajāṇḍamu* (cf. I.4), a common image of the universe as the Creator God's egg. The generative image here is furthered by a reference to the Earth Goddess as *adaḥ para sphurat prakṛti,* 'Nature shining beyond *that* [i.e. the universe]'. TKR 272 adds that Nature is *mūla prakṛtiyaina śakti*, the feminine force that is the root cause of the physical world’s existence.

IV.22 The *asura* Hiraṇyakaśipu performed great *tapas* and gained the favour of Lord Brahma. When denied immortality, he asked that he should not be killed by man or beast, during the day or night, inside or outside, on the earth or in the sky, with weapons or with fists. So in order to destroy him, Lord Viṣṇu appeared at dusk as the ferocious Nara-siṁha or Man-Lion. He placed the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu on his lap in the middle of an atrium and disembowelled him with his claws.

IV.23 ‘redder and redder. . . deeper and deeper, and deeper still’ is a translation of *dūṟa dūṟa maṟi kĕmpun vĕṇḍiyun dūṟa*.

The idea of the Trinity or *mūrti trayī*, i.e. Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva is mapped onto the three *guṇas* or qualities, *viz. sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* which are associated with the colors white, red and black respectively. The image is also a representation of lion claws that are white at the tip, red underneath and black at the paws (TKR 275).

The last phrase of the poem is the rhetorical question ‘*mithyā harī*?’ a play on the word *hari* that means both Viṣṇu and lion.

IV.24 Long ago, the honorable but ambitious demon King Bali conquered the entire universe. Viṣṇu descended to Earth as a brahman dwarf (*vāmana*) and approached Bali with a request for just three paces of land (hence the epithet Trivikrama). When the king readily accepted, Vāmana grew and grew into a humongous figure, covering the Earth with one step, the heavens with another, and finally crushing King Bali's head with the third.

This story is very popular among the South Indian Vaiṣṇava poets. Often the poems focus on Vāmana's fantastic growth as in Nammāḻvār's 7.4.1 ‘First, the discus rose to view. . .’ (see Ramanujan 1981, 4), or Potana's famous *intintai vatuḍintayai. . .*, or *ravi bimbam upamimpa. . .,* which is very similar to the imagery of Nammāḻvār. Here however, Śrī Kṛṣṇadevarāya focuses on the idea of light and darkness, a representation of King Bali's conflicting nature as both demon king and obliging *bhakta*. His ultimate demise at the feet of Lord Viṣṇu grants him instantaneous salvation (cf. ‘God of Three Paces’ in VI.98).

According to TKR 275, ‘the constellation called Crocodile’ Śiṁśumāra is a crocodile shaped asterism that lies beyond the nine planets (*nava-graha*). Monier-Williams 1069 and 1076

list Śiṁśumāra as a porpoise, in particular those indigenous to the River Gaṅga, and *śiśumāra* as an alligator, or dolphin-shaped collection of stars held to be a form of Viṣṇu.

IV.25 Paraśurāma is a well-known figure in Hindu mythology with many diverse associations. Here he is the axe-wielding form of Viṣṇu who descends to Earth in order to rid her of evil kings. In his rage he kills the *kṣatriyas* 21 times over (cf. V.47).

Paraśurāma uses an arrow (*ambakam*) to cut a pass through the Himālayan Mount Krauñca. The word *krauñca* also applies to a heron. The swan is a symbol of fame and is explicitly referred to in this verse as *kīrti haṁsamu* (cf. II.42).

IV.26 Rāma is the ideal man, born to kill the demon Rāvaṇa. Rama is another name for Lakṣmi, and Raghu is an ancestor of Rāma, hence his common epithet Rāghava, or in this case *raghu-kula-svāmi*.

The basis for this poem is a test of skill found in Chapter XII of Kiṣkindha Kāṇḍa of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In order inspire confidence in the monkey king Sugrīva, Rāma fires a single arrow that pierces seven *sāla* trees, disappears into the earth, and reappears to return to his quiver. The 'seven organs' are actually the seven bodily constituents or *sapta-dhātuvulu* viz. plasma (*rasa*), blood (*rakta*), muscle (*māṁsa*), fat (*medas*), bone (*asthi*), marrow (*majja*) and semen (*śukra*).

sāla or *arjuna* trees (Tel *maddi*) are Indian River Trees. TKR 277 offers a variant reading of *sapta-tāla*, i.e. *tāṭi cĕṭlu* or palmyra trees. This verse is also found in the *Manu Caritramu*.

IV.27 The Telugu onomatopoeic sounds used here are '*jhāt*', '*chyūt*', and '*ṭhāt*'. Indra's charioteer Mātali (*biḍaujaḥ kṣattṛ*) is sent to aid Lord Rāma in his battle against Rāvaṇa.

IV.28 This uniquely beautiful verse makes reference to several mythological events. In a drunken stupor (hence 'no self-control' *avaśa-ātmatan*), Balarāma once diverted the river Yamuna with his plough. TKR 280 cites a story (from the *Mahābhārata*?) when Balarāma attempts to rescue his nephew Sāmba from Hastināpura by rerouting the Yamuna. Here, however, he is supposedly searching for his wife from his previous Rāma *avatāra*. Sīta (literally 'furrow') was found when King Janaka ploughed the earth as preparation for a religious rite. Later, at the time of her self-willed death, Sīta was swallowed by her mother the Earth.

The word *kṣiti* ('earth') is repeated four times in this verse and the use of repeated gutturals in the line *kṣiti-hala-kṛṣṭi puṭṭi aḍagĕn kṣiti* expresses Balarāma's violent digging (cf. II.90). His separation pains (*virahārti*) becomes the cause (*hetu*) of his paleness (*pāṇḍimamu*) and functions as a unique *hetu alaṅkāra*.

IV.29 During his childhood in Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa lifted Mt. Govardhana like a giant umbrella, shielding the villagers and their livestock from a violent rainstorm conjured by Lord Indra. This verse seems to be based on the *Nārāyaṇa Kavacam*, or the Armour of Viṣṇu, a praise poem sung for protective purposes, and the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, a popular hymn that enumerates the thousand names of Lord Viṣṇu.

Yadu is the name of an ancient king, the eldest son of Yayāti and Devayāni (cf. Note I.16). He was the progenitor of an entire clan known as the Yādavas, who came to be ruled by LordViṣṇu in his Kṛṣṇa *avatāra*.

IV.30 Although this verse ends with a vocative to Nārāyaṇa (*keśavā*), this poem is a clear but subtle reference to Viṣṇu's descent as the historical Gautama Buddha (circa 500 BCE). The

‘pentad of arrows’ or *bāṇa pañcakamu* corresponds to the Buddha's control of the five senses, and the lines ‘Why did You move so fast? Ah, yes, your intentions are Known!’ is a fairly literal translation of *tvara kāviñcitivi eṭiko ahaha* ***buddha****mbayyĕ nī bhāva*. The theme of women's chastity is referred to as *śīla*. Manmatha is referred to in this poem as *tvat-suta*, 'Your son'.

IV.31 Kalki is the messianic future *avatāra* whose descent signals the end of this present Kali *yuga*. He is described as a master horse rider and completes the evolutionary order of *avatāras* that moves all the way from aquatic to purely human life.

The Five Dreadful Sins (*pañca-mahā pātakālu*, here *mahāgha pañcakam*) are- killing a brahman (*brahma-hatya*), drinking liquor (*surā-pānam*), stealing (*steyam*), being with a guru's wife (*guru aṅgana gamaḥ*) and association with offenders of the first four sins (*saṁsarga*). The Five Gaits (in Sanskrit with their Telugu counterparts) are- amble (*askanda* i.e. 'not-split,' *ravālu),* trot (*dhaurita*, *joḍana*), gallop (*recita*, *baviri*), leap (*valgita*, *caukaḷimpu*) and vault (*pluta*, *duvālam*).

‘barbarians’ are *kīkaṭulu*. The armour (*vāravāṇi*) is like silver chain mail, knit together with lightning (*vidyut-grantha*).

IV.32 Viśvakarma is the celestial architect, here described as *sudhāśana varthak*i, literally 'the carpenter for those who have ambrosia as their food'. ‘What a pity!’ is the Telugu exclamation *akaṭā*. ‘a fine home. . . decorated with gems’ is *nilayamu maṇimayambu sārthamu*. In some versions of the Āṇḍāḷ story, Viṣṇu has riches buried in Viṣṇucitta's house, which later become a dowry for his future son-in-law Raṅganātha.

CHAPTER V

GODA

V.I Jāmbavati, daughter of the bear king Jāmbavat, is one of the eight principal wives of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For Nīḷa, see Lakṣmi. The River Yamuna (*udaya kaḷindā*, literally 'arising from Mount Kaḷinda') is seen as flowing with black waters (cf. II.58 and Note II.58). The serpent Śeṣa once fell to Earth and merged with the Vĕṅkaṭa Hills. His hood is supposed to rest at Tirumala, his body at Ahobilam and his tail at Śrīśailam in western Andhra. Yellow-Eyed Lion is *haryakṣa*.

V.3 This beautifully complex *avatārika padyam* written in the Mahā Sragdhara meter introduces the poem's namesake, the goddess Goda Devi. The poet even embeds the word '*goda*' in the verse, not explicitly, but rather subtly within a compound created with elision, or *sandhi*, literally 'joining'. The phrase is *kuḍuṅgodarakṣoṇi*, or *kuḍuṅga-udara-kṣoṇi*, literally 'thicket middle ground.' The word *udara* can also mean 'belly', or even 'womb'.

The image here is based on the idea of *puruṣāyitam* or 'woman on top' (TKR 472 *upari-suratam*), directly referred to in the verse as *pai-prauḍhi* and *vīrāyitam*. Here the woman is above the man in order to prove her sexual superiority, but she quickly becomes tired and turns over onto her back. The tender mango leaves that are like the Love God's weapons (TKR 472 *cigur-āku āyudham*) announce the woman's defeat (*oṭambu ĕṟigi*). Unlike the more overtly sexual verses of other classical poets, Śrī Kṛṣṇadevarāya invokes lovemaking as both a passionate and generative act. This sensual poem of creation (cf I.2) leads directly to the discovery of the miraculous baby Goda, and sets the tone for the entire chapter that follows.

Although the poem is imbued with *śṛṅgāra rasa* or erotic mood, it also functions on a spiritual level (*ādhyātmika*). The couples who take shelter under the mango trees are like individual souls (*jīvātmalu*) seeking shade from the blazing sun, whose brilliance is likened to the all-powerful Lord above. The poem thus has interpretations that relate to both *kāma* and *mokṣa*. My thanks to Professor Dattatreya Shastri of Andhra University for his insightful explanation of this verse.

V.4 This Utpalamāla poem slowly builds momentum as it leads the reader to the first vision of Goda. 'baby girl, the Auspicious One' is *śubhāṅgi ŏkka bālam*, literally 'a child with blessed limbs'.

V.5 'every mark of beauty' is *sulakṣaṇa vitānam*.

V.6 'swelled with happiness at becoming a mother' is *pŏṅgi ā amayunun* and 'breast milk' is *nija stanyambu*. Even though Viṣṇucitta's 'pious wife' (*dharma-gehani*) did not give birth to the child, the idea is that her loving righteousness allows her to instantaneously produce mother's milk.

GODA'S BEAUTY

V.7 For the next thirty verses, the poet describes the blooming adolescent beauty of Goda Devi. Unlike most Sanksrit descriptions of goddesses, which proceed upward from feet to head (*āpāda-mastakam*), like the description of Umā in Sarga I of Kāḷidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* (see Note 1:33 in Heifetz 1985, 139), here the extended visualization of Goda's body slowly moves from head to toe (cf. Raṅganātha in VI.98). This methodical approach of *keśādi pādam*, from hair to feet, approximates the progression of names found in the *Lalita Sahasra-nāma*; see TKR 476-77 for a comparative list.

The overall style of this section seems to follow, in both tone and content, the *Soundarya Lahari*, a praise poem to the goddess Sarasvati attributed to Śaṅkara, but almost certainly written by one of his many South Indian disciples. This section also bears testimony to the poet's familiarity with Āṇḍāḷ's own poetry, the Tamil *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* and *Tiruppāvai*, which these Telugu poems are highly resonant with. A detailed analysis of this section in reference to these other works would make for a fascinating study of the interplay between Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu.

This complex *sīsa padyam* introduces this section by describing Goda's adolescence- the gradual development from girl to young woman that almost goes unnoticed (TKR 478 *ĕvarikī tĕliyakuṇḍā jārukunnaṭlu*). Like any transition, we usually notice the coming of the new rather than the passing of the old, and often, changes can feel both gradual and sudden (TKR 479).

I have tried to preserve the feelings of this poem but many things have been reinterpreted and repositioned. *bŏma* is a play on words meaning both *kan-bŏmalu* (eyebrows) and *āṭa-bŏmmalu* (play dolls). *loga cŏccĕn* I have translated as 'reserved'. The phrase *menu ṟŏcc-orvaka* is unclear and I have loosely translated it as 'she grew aware of her body'. I believe the phrase maybe referring to the beginning of menstruations (see VVS 358 and TKR 478 for other interpretations). *vātĕṟa tŏnṭikaivaḍi*, 'her lips were not like before' and *nābhi pĕṭṭukŏniyĕ,* 'her navel grew inward' have been omitted. My thanks to Dr. G. Indira for her assistance with this verse.

V.8 'those names' refers to commonplace descriptions of beautiful women, in this case Hemāṅgi (Golden Body), Aruṇoṣṭhi (Red Lips) and Candramukhi (Moon Face). *śyāma* means dark or black, but also refers to a teenage girl under the age of 16 (Brown 758). VVS 359 and TKR 479 have different readings, *śyāmātvambu* and *śyāmāṅkambu* respectively. The saying (*vākyam*) quoted here is *śiraḥ pradhāna,* literally 'the head is most important'.

V.9 This short *kanda padyam* employs a play on the word *cakra* which can mean wheel, circle, ring, or Viṣṇu's discus Sudarśana. *āyata bhuja*, 'long-armed' has been omitted. Kṛṣṇa is referred to as *yadu-pati*, Lord of the Yadus, and Love is Maruḍu.

V.10 Most young girls wear a decorative *bŏṭṭu* or *tilakam*, but only married women (*sīmantini*) decorate the part in their hair with red *kuṁkum/sindhūra*. The *sīmantam*, or part that extends to the forehead, is also the name of a ceremony performed for expecting mothers during their first pregnancy.

V.11 'Vināyaka's night' is *caturthi niśa*, the night of celebrating a special *pūja* to Gaṇeśa, commonly known in Andhra as Vināyaka Caviti. *caturthi* is the fourth day in a lunar fortnight and hence the moon is not full (*asphāra indu*). As the story goes, the Moon mocked the pot-

bellied Gaṇeśa who was stuffed with sweets, and so Gaṇeśa cursed the Moon, saying that anyone looking at the moon on the night of Vināyaka Caviti would be falsely accused of wrongdoing. Here the standard *upama* of a moon-like face is inverted, the *apakīrti* or ill fame falling back on the Moon who is accused of theft (*corambu*).

V.12 This verse is based on the standard comparison of a woman's eyes to those of a deer. Here the beauty of Goda's eyes have surpassed (*gĕlvaga*) those of the deer, thus causing the jealousy or enmity (*sūḍu*). Goda's brow is fair, scented and decorated with a *bŏṭṭu*. 'fresh raw musk' is *pacci kastūri.*

V.14 'rum' is *sīdhu*, see Apte 988.

V.15 This poem is based on the fact that Candra and Lakṣmi are brother and sister, both born from the Ocean of Milk. It is considered inappropriate for a woman to be outside of her home without earrings on. Moreover, a brother should never look at his sister in such a state. The red corners of her eyes *'rāgam ŏppan kaṭākṣa',* are another mark of young beauty. My thanks to Dr. Ramavarapu Sharat Babu for his helpful explanation of this verse.

V.16 Another image based on the inversion and novel usage of stock metaphors. A woman's nose is said to be fine and fragrant like a *campaka* flower, and her teeth straight and white like jasmine. In this case her teeth are so clear that they function like mirrors.

Compare this image to I.5, 'k*aruppūram nāṟumo. . .' Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* 7.1 and Mukku Timmana's '*nānā-sūna-vitāna-vāsanalan. . .'* in NRS 178.

V.17 The image here is based on the maturation of beauty. Her neck is more like a conch shell now because the sandalwood paste accentuates the lines of her neck, and her singing voice is more mature (see the next poem V.18).

V.18 In Indian music theory, there are three main octaves (*tristhānamulu*, or *saptaks* in modern parlance), *viz. mandra* (lower), *madhya* (middle) and *tāra* (upper).

V.19 Lotus stalks are filled with countless fibrous threads (*bisamulu*). 'journey of her life' is *tanu-yātra*.

V.20 This is one of the most complex images in the poem. It is based on the design of a *bāsikam*, a small golden pendant tied around the foreheads of brides and grooms at the time of their wedding ceremony, cf I.53. Here Goda's chest is being compared to Rati's *bāsikam*. The gold-lace tassels attached to the pendant string are like Goda's sparkling armlets. My thanks to Dr. Ramavarapu Sharat Babu and Dr. G. Indira for their help with this verse.

V.22 While Rāma was pining for his beloved Sīta he overheard the love song of *cakravāka* birds, and out of frustration he cursed them that they be separated every night, only to be united during the day. A curse (*śāpam*) is believed to be black (*kappu*).

V.23 This voluptuous image is common to the medieval painting and sculpture of South India (cf. *Kumārasambhava* I.40). 'grand old elders. . . straightforward truth' is a fairly literal translation of *ghanam-agu-vāru nija ārjavamu*.

V.24 The next three poems make reference to a woman's *āru* or *nūgāru* (Skt *romāvaḷi*), the fine line of hair that extends up from the navel. This mark of young feminine beauty is often admired by Indian poets. 'cuts through the folds of his cloth-covered scabbard' is *ŏṟaton kuṭlu tunisi*.

V.25 The term for snake is *kuṇḍalini*, a direct reference to the tāntric concept of *kuṇḍalini śakti*, a primal energy that lies 'coiled' at the base of the spine. Through yogic practice, this force can be channeled up through the body. 'She Who Walks Like a Swan' is *aṇḍa-ja gāmini*.

V.26 The idea here is that Goda's arms and waist are so thin they almost disappear. Compare this to Śrīnātha's *Naiṣadhīya Caritramu* II.21 in NRS 28.

V.27 The 'three folds of skin above her waist', *tanu madhya vaḷī bhaṅgamulu,* are conventional markers of female beauty.

V.28 'One Whose Breasts are Twin Koka Birds' is *koka-stani*. The *koka* or *kokila* bird is the Indian black cuckoo. This verse is another example of *hetu alaṅkāra*, a poetic device of causality.

V.29 In this description of Goda's buttocks (*kaṭi*), the phrase *añca-padamu* or 'swan feet' could be a subtle reference to a type of lovemaking nailmark mentioned in the *kāma śāstras* or love manuals (TKR 492).

V.30 This short but complex Teṭagīti verse employs three separate metaphors centered around a plantain tree (*kadaḷi*). The comparison of a woman's thighs (*tŏḍalu*) to the thick and smooth trunk of a plantain tree is quite common (cf. V.3I and *Kumārasambhava* I.36), but the usage of the red flower and pink pistils as an extension of the metaphor is unique. I have flushed out this rather terse verse to make clear the imagery.

V.31 The umbrella (*gŏḍugu*) and vase (*kalaśam*) are signs of royalty and wealth. For clarity I have added 'royal servants', a comparison to Lord Viṣṇu who rules the world with Śrī (wealth) by his side. The *kāma śāstras* explain that husbands should 'serve' their wives by massaging their thighs. 'Holds the Wealth of the World' is an interpretation of *vasudhalo ĕṭṭi śrī kala vāru*.

The word *karabha* which can refer to the back of the hand from wrist to knuckles, or the trunk of an elephant (see Apte 336), are both conventionalized images for a woman's thighs (*ūruvulu*).

V.32-33 These two verses are based on the curious comparison of a woman's calves (Tel *pikkalu,* Skt *jaṅghalu*) to unhusked ears of corn (*kalama garbhambu*). This metaphor may be unique to Telugu as I have found no parallels in Sanskrit or Tamil.

Kāma is referred to as *vala-rāja*, the Lord of Love, and his parrots as his 'family' or *kuṭumbamu* (cf. II.37).

V.34 'water mixed with wax' is *lakka nīru*. *lac (*from the Sanskrit *lakṣā*) is a type of red dye made from crushed insects and plant resin that women once used to color the soles of their feet.

As a goddess with lotus-like feet, Goda's feet are already colorful. Here her shiny white toenails are likened to her smiling teeth.

V.35 The ankles of women are likened to tortoises (*kacchapamulu*), while elephants are known for their regal gait. The rivalry (*ugra kalaham*) between 'the turtle and the tusker' is an ancient and longstanding one; and this verse explains its cause (*hetu*).

V.36 Fresh turmeric (*nūtana haridra*) is bright yellow, pale in comparison to Goda's dark golden body. Over time however, turmeric darkens and almost turns black, the color of shame or disgrace. The verse is an extended play on the word for night, which in most cases can also apply to turmeric. The word order here represents a progression from early to late night- *rātri*, *niśa*, *tamisra*, *kṣapa* and *niśītha*.

GODA'S LOVE FOR THE LORD

V.37 The epithets of Goda Devi are 'Moon Faced One', *indu-vadana,* and 'Earth Goddess', *dhara-aṅgana*. The 'snake maidens' or *nāga-kanyalu* are her friends because they dwell in the ground. 'wedding songs that described the Lord's virtues', *pariṇayāmeya-geyamulu anantu kalyāṇa guṇamulu,* find mention throughout this section.

V.38 'Lord of Wealth' is *śrīśa*. 'Vaiṣṇava *purāṇas*' most likely refers to the *Bhāgavatam*, i.e. the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* or possibly the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* which is of particular importance to Śrī Vaiṣṇavas. Based on tradition, TKR 500-1 believes that a student of Rāmānuja, also named Viṣṇucitta, wrote the commentaries *vyākhyālu rāstū*, whereas I read *racana* as 'told' rather than 'written'. VVS 376 glosses the phrase as *vyākhyānamu ceyuṭa ceta* as if Viṣṇucitta was auto-commenting as he recited the text.

The beautiful visualization of Goda with her 'bun that leaned to one side', *ŏkka inta ŏṟaga iḍina dhammilla valayambu,* is an iconic image found in all artistic and sculptural renderings of the goddess. This poem also includes a description of the eponymous act of wearing garlands intended for god, an image so important that the poet reinforces the idea in the very next poem V.39.

'flower basket' or *gūḍa* is also a 'basket in which a Vaishnavite devotee keeps his images used in worship' (Brown 235).

V.39 'thin *cīra*' is a *dukūlamu*. 'around her breasts' is qualified with *tāvulu uppitalan* meaning 'where fragrance is born'. I have omitted this phrase that may refer to *kuṁkum* being used around her armpits as a type of anti-perspirant/deodorant (see TKR 501 *vāsana līnagā*). 'shouted' is *vĕcca ūrcucu,* literally 'hot breathing'. 'But one day' has been added to separate this line from the previous part of the poem which describes Goda's daily routine.

V.40 *dvitiyākṣara prāsa* is a 'rhyming' device in which the second consonant of each line is repeated across all four *pādas*. This technique is quite common in classical Telugu and can be found in all the poems written in the Sanskrit *vṛtta* meters, as well as the Telugu *kanda padyam*. In this poem, not just one but three syllables (*tri-prāsa*) are repeated. *pā-ḍi-na* appears in each line as *pāḍina* (sung), *pāḍinan* (justly), *kāpāḍina* (saved) and *tropāḍina* (fell).

This poem marks the beginning of Goda's *nindā stuti*, or 'praise through blame or censure'. This highly personalized style of eulogizing god is common to *bhakti* poetry and is a likely extension of modalities that originated in the *akam* poems or 'love poems' of Tamil Saṅgam literature. Goda's recapitulation of Viṣṇu's *avatāras* has a critical and rather colloquial tone, functioning like a perfect foil to Viṣṇucitta's majestic panegyric found in Chapter IV. Note how the poet consistently uses the informal Telugu pronouns *itaḍu* and *ataḍu*, 'this man' and 'that man' respectively (cf. Note IV.17).

Underlying this entire section however, is Goda's burning love (*tāpam*) for Lord Viṣṇu. The immediacy of this mode adds to its effective realism. Goda behaves, towards god himself, like any abandoned lover, pining away, and constantly oscillating between anger and desire.

V.41 VVS 379 takes *sura-mauni* as a compound word meaning 'god-sage' and applies it to Vāmana, Paraśurāma and Buddha. The words for fish (*gaṇḍĕ*) and black turtle (*nalla dāsarigāḍu*) are used for base simplicity. 'stirred' is *uḍikiñcu*, to boil, cook, enrage or offend.

V.43 'To me, all creatures are equal' is an interpretation of the Sanskrit *ātmavat sarva bhūtāni*. 'have no voice' is *noru leni*.

V.44 'aquatic births' is *jalajatva*, referring to the *matsya* (fish) and *kūrma* (tortoise) *avatāras*.

V.46 This poem begins with the word *mŏdalu* or 'at the beginning' which relates to the pre-purāṇic origins of the god Viṣṇu. The appellation Upendra or Indrānuja, the younger brother of Indra, seems to relate to Viṣṇu's descent as the celibate Vāmana, intimated by the phrase *vaṭuvu ayyu,* i.e. to become a celibate or bachelor. TKR 506 glosses Upendra as *indruni tammuḍu vāmanuḍu*. The earliest Vedic reference to Viṣṇu is as Tri-Vikrama, the Triple Strider, a direct link to his three paces as Vāmana.

Bhṛgu's first wife Diti (see Srinivas Rao 299) gave birth to the Daityas, a group of *asuras*. Once, when these demons were chased by Lord Viṣṇu, Diti gave them shelter and hid them behind her own body. When Viṣṇu released his Sudarśana discus and killed Diti, Bhṛgu cursed Viṣṇu (or in this case Upendra) that he would suffer the loss of a wife. This curse was only realized aeons later in his Rāma *avatāra*. The story is told in the Uttara Kāṇḍa of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a later appendage to the epic that deals in part with Rāma's poignant abandonment of Sīta. A similar story is told about Uśana, another wife of Bhṛgu and mother of Śukra, the guru of the *asuras*. 'divine act' is *deva kāryam*.

V.47 'The three kinds of kings' is *trai-vidhyavat pīṭhika ākhyalu tri-sthānamulu*, literally the 'three types of kings who occupy three different thrones', *viz.* kings who are enemies (*śatru*), friends (*mitra*) or neutral (*udāsīna*). *eḍu mārlu* or 'seven times' yields the product 21 which is likened to the number of times Paraśurāma killed the *kṣatriyas* (cf. IV.25), as well as the 21 notes of the Indian scale, i.e. the seven notes (*sapta-svaras*) in each of the three octaves (*tri-sthānamulu*, cf. V.18).

Here 'lute' is the Sanskrit word *vallaki*. VVS 382 and TKR 507 identify it as a bowed instrument when they take *koṇamu* as a *kaḍḍini* (stick) and *kamānu* (bow) respectively. I read *koṇamu* as a tip or edge, and interpret Paraśurama's axe (*kuṭhāram*) as a type of plectrum.

'raging sun' is *praḷaya arka*, literally an 'apocolyptic sun'. 'melody of love' is a double translation of the word *rakti* which can mean love, or a musical melody (Brown 642).

After Paraśurāma killed all the kings on earth, he renounced his lordship over the 'perfect Goddess of the Earth' (*bhū-satī tilakambu*) and gave her to the sage Kāśyapa to look after like his own child (*biḍḍa aipovade*).

V.48 'Killer' is Viṣṇu as *nilampa ari vidāri*, literally 'the killer of the enemies of the gods', and 'Lady of the Lotus' is Lakṣmi as *padmā-kānta*. 'struck by a lotus' is *mohana-kañjambu vaici*.

V.49 'everyone' is the colloquial Telugu phrase *naluvuru*, literally 'four people'. *rāvaṇa-svasa* or 'Rāvaṇa's sister' is the shape-shifting demoness Śūrpaṇakha. Her disfigurement at the hands of Lakṣmaṇa is considered to be the root cause of the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. This pivotal episode in the *Rāmāyaṇa* plotline is more detailed in South Indian versions than in Vālmīki's original. Take for example Kamban̲'s epic *Irāmāvatāram,* in which Śūrpaṇakha's genuine love for Rāma is sympathetically developed over some forty verses, only to be contrasted with the violent, rape-like attack by Lakṣmaṇa when he slices off her nose and ears, as well as her nipples. See Paṭalam V in Hart and Heifetz (1988).

V.50 'lion-like ferocity' is *mun rāṭ-kaṇṭhīravamai* in reference to Rāma's previous incarnation as Narasiṁha. 'blood, fast flowing, fell' is a translation of *phīṭ-kāra sravat-asramai*, literally 'blood flowing with the sound *phīṭ*'. The extended metaphor (cf. II.41) is based on the image of a sandalwood tree (*śrī-khaṇḍa*) wrapped in cobras (*kumbhīnasa*).

V.52 This poem and the next one (V.53) function as transitions from Goda's critique of Rāma to Kṛṣṇa. 'dusty lotus feet' *pat-vanaja-kṣodamu* refers to when Rāma transformed Ahalya from a rock back into a woman with a mere brush of his foot. The *yogis* (*muni bṛndambu*) mentioned here are the Seven Sages who are reborn on earth as the *gopis* of Vṛndāvana.

The noble Yādava Akrūra (here Gāndini, son of the Kāśi princess of the same name) travelled to Vraja and convinced Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to come back to Bhojapura (Mathura) so that they could kill their uncle, the evil King Kaṁsa.

V.53 Ayomukhi ('Iron Face') is another demoness from the *Rāmāyaṇa* who becomes enamoured with Lakṣmaṇa. She is disfigured in the same way as Śūrpaṇakha- her nose, ears and one breast are sliced off (see Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* Araṇya Kāṇḍa 69-17).

The ancient King Kakudmi once took his beautiful daughter Revati to the realm of Lord Brahma in order to seek his advice about finding her a suitable husband. There they waited for some time before an audience was granted, unaware that several millions of earth years had passed in that short time in *brahma-loka*. Brahma then suggested that she marry the noble Balarāma, brother of Lord Kṛṣṇa; but since so many generations had passed, humans had evolved into much shorter creatures, and Revati towered over Balarāma like a palm tree, *niṭṭa tāṭivaṇṭi ativa* (see note about sandhi, TKR 512 and VVS 387). Balarāma supposedly tapped her on the head with his plough and she shrank to his size. There is a play on the word *musali* which in Sanskrit means mace, hence an epithet of Balarāma, but in Telugu it means 'an old woman', i.e. Revati.

Ugrasena (Kaṁsa's father) employed a dwarfish maid (*maṟugujju preṣyakai*) who seems to be the same perfumer Kubja or Trivakra mentioned in verse I.8, indicated by the verb *diddi*, to fix or correct (cf. *Bhāgavatam* Canto X, Chapter 48).

V.54 Radha is the only *gopi* that Kṛṣṇa actually unites with, cf V.68. She plays an important role in the mythology of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* as the couple is seen as the divine unitive force.

GODA AND HER FRIENDS

V.55 This short *vacanam* marks the end of the *nindā stuti* and the beginning of a highly conversational exchange between Goda and her friends (Tel *cĕllikattĕ*, Tam *to<u>l</u>i*). These colloquial dialogues function at a different level of diction than the rest of the poem and resemble the speech patterns of old Tamil love poetry (cf. Note V.40).

'the color of molten gold' is a translation of *puṭa-pāka nikāśam,* glossed by TKR 513 as *baṅgāru vannĕ rāvaṭāniki karaga pĕṭṭaṭam*, or 'melting in order to get a golden color'. This phrase is in direct reference to Goda's *kāka* (burning) or *tapanam* (heat) which are standard synonyms for *viraha-rāgam*, the intense and fiery pains of separation. This section of the poem highlights this metaphor with various poetic shades and images. In the Indian tradition, both love and religious practice (*tapas*) are understood as activities which generate heat, a kind of 'burning' that is emotional, physical and ultimately creative. For a fascinating contrast of these two modes, see Viṣṇucitta's plea in *vacanam* V.157 (not translated here).

Kaiṭabha is the name of a powerful demon killed by Lord Viṣṇu. 'inner heart' is *antaḥ karaṇa,* a technical term which applies to the four constituents of the mind- mind-heart (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahaṁkāra*) and consciousness (*citta*). The poet is very fond of using reduplicative phrases in his prose passages i.e. 'over and over' *punaḥ punaḥ*, 'day after day' *nāḍu nāḍu*, 'little by little' *inta inta*, and 'thinner and thinner' *giṭu giṭu*.

V.56 The gods Indra and Candra are epitiomes of masculinity. 'messenger girls' are *tera-kattĕ*, go-between girls, messengers, sevants or 'strange women, women of loose character' (Brown 340).

V.57 The context here (and in the next verse V.58) is that Goda and her friends continue their converation even as they pretend to be playing. 'making sure no one was around' has been added for clarity.

V.58 'Leave him out of this!', *poniṇdu annan,* is taken from the next verse V.59. 'a man who asks for rice pudding need not be poor' is the proverb *pāsĕmbu aḍigina vāre pedalĕ*.

V.59 The word *kāni* ('or', 'rather', 'than') appears six times in this poem.

V.60 This *sīsa padyam* desribes Goda's lovesick nights, and the actions that 'reveal her' to her friends. I have rearranged and omitted certain elements of the verse in order to preserve the repeated word *tĕlupa* ('to make known' or 'to make clear') without encumbering the overall rhythm. Two onomatopoeic phrases appear- *ciṭ ciṭ* is the sound of the 'extinguished night lamp' and *phūt* is her 'whimpering sigh'.

V.61 The idea here is that Goda's burning love heats up the water in the pond to the point where the pearls disintegrate into chalk (*sunnam-aina*). This is the first of three poems spoken by three different friends. If we understand Goda as the creative force *śakti* (cf. Note V.25), TKR 519 describes these friends (*nāga-kanyalu*) as the three central *nāḍis* or energy meridians of the body, *viz. iḍa*, *piṅgala* and *suṣumna*.

V.62 This *bŏṭṭu* is made from a paste of musk (*kasturi*). 'sizzle. . . sound like a slap on the face' is *cu<u>rr</u>anucu mŏgumbu vresinaṭu*.

V.63 In this instance, Goda's breasts (*pāl-iṇḍlu*) are compared to dolls made of cork (*běṇḍu bǒmma-gati*).

V.66 ‘Like hot coals roasting in a fire pit’ is a translation of *puṭa pāka prakārambu agu viyoga davadhu bharambu*. Note how *viyoga*, 'separation from a lover' is embedded within the metaphoric phrase.

V.67 This poem is based on the image *veṇu-gopāla* Kṛṣṇa, a common visualization of the god when he's playing his bamboo flute, head leaning to the left (*ḍā*), and one leg curved in an iconic *bhaṅgima* (stance). ‘margosa-leaf eyebrows’ is *nimba-chada-bhruvu*. ‘full-blown scarlet mallow’ is *paruvampu maṅkěna viri*, also known as a scarlet pentapetes, or the flower of the Bastard Teak (TKR 522 *modugu pūvu*). In Hindu cosmology, the universe has seven worlds i.e the *sapta-lokas*, or here the *sapta-bhuvanālu*. They are compared to the standard seven-holed bamboo flute (*veṇu*).

V.68 ‘pleasures’ are *rucira bhogamu* or sexual enjoyment, a common Indian metaphor for spiritual union (*saṁyogam).* For Radha, see Note V.54

V.69 The Yamuna is referred to as *ina-atma-ja*, the daughter of the Sun (cf. V.70). ‘what did they see?’ is the colloquial *kāñcuṭa emi*. ‘A woman can keep some dignity, can't she?’ is *valadā abhimānam ǒkinta intiki*.

V.70 The river Yamuna is the Sun's daughter (*ugra-mayūkha-nandini*) and Yama's brother (*śamana-svasa*). ‘mistress’ is *tāpi-kattě*, literally 'a pimp's friend'. ‘union with the Lord's divine body’ is *śauri tanu yogapu*.

V.72 This poem relates to a common Hindu idea that groups of people reincarnate collectively, and that souls (*ātmas*) have long, continuous relationships with friends and relatives that last over several lifetimes (cf. V.37 and V.79).

V.73 ‘like wise seers with knowledge of past, present and future’ is *traikālika jñānavantul-aina ṛṣalu aṭla*.

V.74 This poem refers to the time when Kṛṣṇa gifted his wife Rukmiṇi a ‘flower from the Tree of Heaven’ or *divija-dru-prasavambu*. The so-called *pārijāta* flower never fades and remains eternally fragrant, imparting an aura of divine beauty to anyone who wears it. Satyabhāma, the most beautiful of Kṛṣṇa's wives, gets terribly jealous when she doesn't receive the prized gift. Kṛṣṇa soothes her by going to Indra's heaven and bringing back not only a flower, but the entire Pārijāta Tree. This story forms the basis of Nandi Timmana's *mahā-kāvyam,* the *Pārijātāpaharaṇamu,* or ‘Stealing the Tree of Heaven’, written in the 16th century at Śrī Kṛṣṇadevarāya's court. See NRS 178-179 for an interesting anecdote about the circumstances of this text’s composition.

‘tiny task turned epic endeavor’ is *jilgun pani anta sesi* (cf. V.77).

V.77 ‘makes mountains out of molehills’ is a translation of the Telugu *goru antalu kŏṇḍalu antalu agunaṭluga cesiti*, literally 'making small things into mountains'.

V.78 Mukunda, 'the Giver of Salvation', is an epithet of Kṛṣṇa.

V.79 The epithet Śṛṅgāriṇi is specifically used to highlight Goda as a 'woman in love'. *uraga kanyakalamu* are ‘snake maidens’, and *dhāruṇi* is ‘the Earth’ (cf. V.37 and Note V.72).

V.80 For Kali Yuga, see Note IV.6. ‘yogic powers’ is *yoga-śakti.* ‘Lord's lotus feet’ is *upendra-pada-ambu-ruhambu*, a metaphor for heaven, or the afterlife.

V.81 ‘the only true love’ is *ŏṇḍĕ bhakti*, referring to devotion to both god and husband. ‘pretenders’ is *vaiśikamulu*, literally 'prostitutes', glossed by TKR 531 as *naṭanalu*.

V.82 ‘Mannāru Svāmi’ refers to the local god of Śrī Villiputtūr (cf. Note II.87).

V.83 ‘brightening comfort’ is *tĕlvulu* or *tĕlpulu*, to teach, instruct, comfort or make clear, based on the Telugu nominal stem '*tĕla*', meaning white. A *bannasaramu* is a special kind of necklace ‘of coral and gold beads or plates, or of pearl chains and gold plates alternatively’ (Brown 528). Here the necklace alternates (*pala-pala-gā*) with sapphires (*nīlamulu*) and pearls.

V.84 This fascinating poem seems to be based on a folk saying which I have not been able to trace. This verse along with the three that follow it are descriptions of Goda's delirious lovesickness at different times of the day– night, morning, afternoon and dusk.

V.85 This image is based on a common theme in classical Indian poetry– each night the lotus flower closes its petals, trapping in bees who are only set free by the sunrays of dawn. Royal chronicles and foreign accounts bear testimony to the fact that cannons were widely used in Kṛṣṇadevarāya's military campaigns (cf. II.9). TKR 534 identifies the particular battle as the 1509 storming of Gaṅga Raja's Fort Śivasamudra in the middle of the Kāveri River. See also Chapter 11 in Sewell.

The ‘Warrior with a Spring Leaf Dagger’ is *taliru-kaiduvu jodu*, an epithet for the God of Love. ‘prying open petals’ is a translation of the alliterative *daḷat-daḷa*.

V.86 This interesting image of a bathhouse (*dhāra-gṛha)* fitted with raised water pumps (*ghaṭa-yantrālu*) is supported by archaeological evidence found in and around Vijayanagaram. *tuhina* (dew or frost), which is compared to the conjurer's *vibhūti* (ash), has been omitted. This metaphor is rather complex; TKR 535 and VVS 405 offer various interpretations.

V.87 This poem is a surreal description of Goda's dream in which dusk appears like a female monkey, *pitṛ-prasū-plavagi*. Compare this image to parts of the Sundara Kāṇḍam of Valmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* in which Sīta dreams about Hanumān, in particular verse 34.22:

> *na aham svapnam imam manye svapne dṛṣṭvā hi vānaram |*
> *na śakyo abhyudayaḥ prāptum prāptaḥ ca abhyudayo mama ||*
> I don't think this is a dream, for seeing a monkey in a dream
> shouldn't bring happiness, and yet I'm happy.

The ‘Lotus Lover’, *tamarasa-āpta,* is the sun. ‘jumped’ is *caṅkram uddāma*, literally 'leaping unbound'.

GODA'S DEVOTION

V.89 ‘Southern Vedas’ is a literal translation of *drāviḍa-āmnāya*, a reference to the Tamil *Divya Prabandham*, also known as the *Nāl-āyiram* or Four Thousand. It is considered by Śrī Vaiṣṇavas to be equal to the four Sanskrit Vedas. The Indian gooseberry *āmalaki* is still commonly used in religious ceremonies. ‘according to ancient tradition’ is *vidhiyutamuga*.

V.90 ‘*bŏṭṭu* of earth’ is *pāṇḍu-mṛt binduvu*, a *bindi* made of white dirt or clay. ‘pumpkin seed’ is *gummaḍi-giñja*, the white colored seed of a common South Indian gourd. ‘cool evenings’, *callini reyiṭi,* implies that Goda performs *pūjas* at both dawn and dusk.

‘offered hospitality’ is *vindula telpa*, glossed by TKR 538 as *ātithyam istūṇḍagā,* and by VVS 408 as *vindu-bhojanamulu seyugā*. The Telugu word *vindu* is derived from the Tamil *virundu,* which can mean either 'guest' or 'banquet' (cf. Tirukkuṟaḷ 86).

nūnĕ-muḍi is hair braided with oil (VVS 408 *nūnegaligi*) or smoke (TKR 538 *dhū*), but the main idea here is the smell of her wet hair, *taḍi tāvulu*.

V.91 ‘allow them some privacy’ is *vijanambu ceya*, literally 'to make without people'. ‘foot of the altar’ is *vedika,* glossed by TKR 539 as *vigraham mundunna tinnĕpai*, the raised step or dais in front of the idol.

V.92 The sacred items mentioned here are still common Vaiṣṇava temple offerings- brown cow *ghee* (*kapila-gavi sarpi*), sandalwood incense (*agaru-dhūpambu*), bananas clusters (*kadaḷī-phalāḷi*), sugar mixed with *ghee* (*śarkara-ājya*), and lily garlands (*kalva-daṇḍa).* ‘sacred Viṣṇu mantra’ is *dvayam* (cf. I.77, II.87 and Note I.77).

V.93 This short *kanda padyam* uses four different variants of the word *khaṇḍa*- ‘ground’ (*khaṇḍita*), ‘bits’ (*khaṇḍambulu*), ‘undivided’ (*akhaṇda*) and ‘chunks’ (*khaṇḍambulu*). ‘Goda and her friends walked outside’, *kadali cĕlula-ton,* has been moved to the next verse V.94.

V.94 ‘consecrated by holy water from the Lord's blessed sandals’ is a translation of *śaṭhakopamanu dhariñci caraṇa tīrthamu kŏni*. The *śaṭhakopam* (or often *śaṭhagopam)* is a religious object commonly found in Vaiṣṇava temples. Gwynn defines it as ‘a cover made of precious metal and shaped like a bowl, inscribed with the marks of Vishnu's feet and placed on the head of a devotee by the priest when uttering a blessing at the end of worship in a temple’. The word also appears as a name for Nammāḻvār (cf. Note VI.98). The supposed Sanskrit origin of the term is not clear.

V.95 Here the name used for Goda is *sudati*, 'a woman with perfect teeth'. Viṣṇu is referred to as *acyuta*, 'firm' or 'fixed', as well as *ā yadu-pati,* ‘that Lord of the Yadus’. ‘singing songs in Tamil’, *drāviḍa-bhāṣa pāḍucu,* is a reference to the *Divya Prabandham*, but more specifically the *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* and *Tiruppāvai* composed by Goda herself (TKR 541).

‘passing the Spring’ has been added as a reference to the description of Spring (*vasanta-varṇana*) that follows this section, but which has been omitted in the present translation.

CHAPTER VI

ŚRĪRAṄGAM

VI.1 ‘Serpentine Hill’ is *kāka-udara-naga*, or Mount Tirumala in the Vĕṅkaṭa range (cf. Note V.1). Vikuṇṭhādevi is cited as the mother of Lord Viṣṇu (TKR 593), possibly a Vedic reference to Indra's second mother (cf. *Ṛg Veda* X.47-50). ‘Maker of Fortunes’ is *śrī-kāri*.

VI.2 Chapter V ends with V.157, a *vacanam* in which Viṣṇucitta begs Śrī Mannāru Svāmi to explain his daughter's intense practice of *tapas* (cf. Note V.55). As a response, the Lord tells the Story of Dāsari which constitutes the beginning of Chapter VI. The telling ends with *vacanam* VI.90 in which the Lords commands Viṣṇucitta as follows- *śrīraṅgambunaku raṅgeśu sevimpa toḍukŏni poyi*- 'go with her (Goda) to Śrīraṅgam and worship Raṅganātha’. I have not translated these two *vacanams* that primarily function as bookends to the beautiful, albeit tangential Story of Dāsari.

VI.91 This beautiful verse compares the island temple-town of Śrīraṅgam to Viṣṇu's heaven. The Kāveri is like the celestial river Viraja that borders Vaikuṇṭham, and the ‘ring of orchards’, *valaya-druma-āvaḷi,* is like the heavenly garden called Pleasure (*nandana-vāṭi)* that surrounds Viṣṇu's paradise. The sprawling temple complex of Śrīraṅgam, considered the largest functional temple in the world, is surrounded by seven concentric rectangular enclosures or *prakāras* that are likened to the ‘Golden Gates of Heaven’, *svarṇa-āvṛti-vrāta*.

VI.92 In the previous verse (VI.91), the Kāveri River is referred to as *sahya-udbhava*, 'born in the Sahyas', a range of mountains known today as the Western Ghats. Here the Kāveri is described as *kavera-duhitṛ*, ‘the Daughter of Kavera’. TKR 658 identifies Kavera as the geographic source of the river, the present-day Talakaveri on Brahmagiri Hill in the Southern Sahyas of Karnataka. The reference more likely applies to the mythological origins of the sacred river. The anthropomorphized goddess Kāveri is the daughter of King Kavera and wife of Sage Agastya. Both performed great *tapas* to Lord Brahma and the story bears resemblance to Bhagīratha's long penance to bring down the river Gaṅga. The Kāveri is often described as Dakṣiṇa Gaṅga, or the Gaṅga of the South.

The ‘tambūra’ *vipañci* is a five-stringed drone instrument. Śrīraṅgam is north of both Madhura and Śrī Villiputtūr, and falls into the traditional territory of the Co<u>l</u>a empire, hence the reference *coḷī* (cf. I.54).

VI.93 ‘prayers of forgiveness’ is an interpretive translation of *agha-marṣaṇa-snāna*. The term *marṣaṇa* can mean 'enduring' or 'forgiving', but here it seems to be a specific type of prayer. VVS 518 glosses the phrase as *agha-marṣaṇa sūktamulanu cĕppucu snānanamu cesi,* and TKR 658 adds *pāpālanu pogŏṭṭe mantrālu paṭhistū*. The Kāveri is described as *marut-vṛthā*, which I have translated as ‘calm’, or 'without wind', possibly from the Sanskrit *vṛthā* which means 'vain' or 'empty'. VVS 518 and TKR 658 offer variant readings- *vṛdhā*, *vṛthā*, and *vṛtā*.

‘noon rites’ is *mādhya-āhnika-ādi*, the special Vaiṣṇava ceremonies perfomed during the day, including the Brahma Yajña and the Pitṛ Yajña.

VI.94 This verse is a description of the prosperous city portion of the Śrīraṅgam complex. The first three walls enclose large commercial and residential areas that support the temple, while the

actual temple begins only after the fourth enclosure. The layout is exactly the same today except that the town has expanded beyond the outer wall.

The poem is intended to highlight the *virakti* of the devotees, an unattachedness, dispassion or general disinterest in earthly enjoyments.

'an ārati of rubies' is *ārati kĕmpuṟālu*. The Telugu word *ārati* or *hārati* (from Skt *ārātrikam*, see Brown 832 and Apte 226) is a sacred offering of lighted camphor waved in front of a deity and then offered to devotees. TKR 660 interprets 'island of white', *vĕlla dīvi,* as the island of Śrīraṅgam.

VI.95 All South Indian temples have water tanks or lotus ponds (*puṣkaraṇis*) that are used for ritual bathing. The tank at Śrīraṅgam is known as Candra or Śaśi in this poem, i.e. the Moon. Caṇḍu is a *dvāra-pālaka* or gatekeeper who guards the temple's inner sanctum (*garbha-gṛha*).

The phrase *akāṇḍa gāhanā cāpala-kṛt* is unclear- VVS 521 and TKR 661 interpret it to be in reference to a 'host of demigods' *marut-guṇamu* that enter the temple at an inappropriate time, only to be scared away by Caṇḍu. I have omitted this idea and translated the qualifier *cāpala-kṛt* as 'whimsical', from the Sanskrit *cāpalyam* meaning fickleness or inconstancy.

As Viṣṇucitta enters the inner sanctum (*loni-vākiṭan*), he moves closer and closer to a full vision (*darśanam*) of Lord Raṅganātha. The next two verses along with the long *vacanam* that follows (VI.96-98) describe Viśvaksena, Garuḍa, and Viṣṇu's weapons (*āyudhams*), thereby functioning like a reverse parellel to the *iṣṭa devata stuti* that begins the entire epic (cf. I.10 back to I.1). The poet is in essence bringing us full circle.

VI.96 'colorful robe' is *kuthambu*. The 'signet ring', *mudra vrelu*, signifies that Viśvaksena acts on behalf of the Lord (cf. I.4 and Note I.4). 'a hundred motionless elephants', *niścalulai. . . danti-vaktrula-śatambu,* could describe engraved stone pillars (still visible today) rather than real elephants. This may be a reference to the Hall of a Thousand Pillars in the fourth court, although 'in the north-east corner [of the first enclosure] a small courtyard open to the sky contains the sanctuary of Viśvaksena (Senai Mudaliyār) with pilasters in the ancient Coḻa style'. See Auboyer 20, 23 and 44 for more information. Sūtravati is Viśvaksena's wife and is of particular importance to Śrī Vaiṣṇavas (cf. VI.122). Compare this poem and I.4 to Svāmi Vedānta Deśika's *Yatirāja Saptati 3*:

> *vande vaikuṇṭha-senānyam devam sūtravati-sakham |*
> *yad vetra-śikhara-spande viśvam etad vyavasthitam ||*
>
> Praise to the Lord of Sūtravati,
> divine commander of Viṣṇu's army!
> Just waving the tip of his staff
> keeps the whole world in order.

VI.97 'Purandara', the Destroyer of Cities, is an epither of Indra. Garuḍa is the 'son of Vinata' (cf. *Bhagavad Gīta* X.30). In Śrī Vaiṣṇava mythology, his body is composed of the four Vedas, *veda-aṅgu*. Contrast the tone and imagery of this poem to verses I.3 and IV.10.

VI.98 This is the longest prose passage in the present translation, and like other long *vacanams* in this text (cf. I.78), there is a heavy usage of rhyme, alliteration and word play. The poet's pace and narrative style lead the reader through a breathtaking head-to-toe description (cf. Note V.7)

of Raṅganātha resting on the serpernt Ādiśeṣa (*śeṣa-śāyi*), a reclining form of Lord Viṣṇu that is still worshipped today in Śrīraṅgam.

'Love' is the handsome god Kāma, here *madhu-mathana*, the Honey-Wine Maker. 'Parāṅkuśa' is another name for Nammāḻvār. 'liberated souls' are *muktulu*, glossed by TKR 664 as *sāyujya sārūpya sāmīpya mukti-pŏndinavāru. sāyujya* and *sārūpya* are technical terms meaning 'absorbed' and 'identified' with the essence of God. Although Nammāḻvār is believed to be chronologically later than Viṣṇucitta (Periya Āḻvār), TKR 664 describes that there is no sense of conventional time (*kālam ledu*) in the presence of god.

Compare the description of Śeṣa to poem I.2. 'primal origin of all the five elements' is *prathama-hetu-bhūtambu agu bhūta tanmātrayun polĕ*, and 'made from the souls of assembled saints' is *dharma-ādi-sūri pariṣat ātmakambu*. TKR 665 identifies Dharma as the name of the first Āḻvār (Pogai?), but this is more likely a reference to the Coḻa king Dharmavarman (VVS 524) who built the first temple at Śrīraṅgam (cf. Note VI.99).

'drowned' is *mārjanam cesi,* technically 'wiped' or 'washed', glossed by TKR 666 as *munagaṭam valla*. I have used 'drowned' as an homage to A. K. Ramanujan (cf. Note IV.5).

'Tree of the Immortal Gods', *tri-daśa taru,* is a reference to the *kalpa-vṛkṣam* or Wish-Fullfilling Tree of Heaven (cf. I.55, V.74). *tri-daśa*, literally 'three stages', applies to the gods who experience infancy, youth and adulthood, but never old age.

The 'Elephant King' is Gajendra, a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu who once became trapped in a thousand-year battle with a crocodile. Gajendra finally cries out in despair and is rescued by Lord Viṣṇu who arrives from heaven to kill the crocodile with his discus. This story known as *Gajendra Mokṣam*, the Rescue of the Elephant King, is a well-loved section in Potana's Telugu *Mahābhāgavatamu*. For an English translation of selected verses, see NRS 143-146.

'his beauty, a form beyond all forms' is *nija rucira mūrti-valana sa-ākāra nir-ākāra*. 'Flame of the Forest' is Tel *maṅkĕna*/*modugu*, Skt *bandhuka*/*bandhujīva* (cf. Note V.67). 'nose like a laughing sesame flower' is *tila-kusuma vilasana apahāsi agu nāsa*, possibly a hidden play on *nuvvu* (sesame) and *navvu* (laugh). 'Bearer of Scents' is a literal translation of *gandha-vahu*, i.e. the breeze.

Rāhu (cf. I.9) falsely thinks that the Moon (*śaśāṅkuḍu anu śaṅku*) is the white lotus at the Lord's navel, i.e. his form as Padmanābha. In fear of enmity (*vairambu,)* Rāhu tries to bribe Lakṣmi who is the Moon's sister (cf. Note V.15).

'Śrīvatsa', literally 'the favourite of Śrī', is a special marking on the chest of the god Viṣṇu; it is also the spot where Lakṣmi rests her head. 'delicate black tulasi leaves', *asita-peśala-tulasī-palāśa* are the traditional offerings made to Raṅganātha. For Narasiṁha, see Note IV.22.

'Jewel in the Sky' is *gagana-maṇi*, i.e the Sun. 'like two lapis pillars layered with topaz' is *puṣya-rāgampu tĕravāru vaidhūrya-maṇi stambha-yugambu*.

'God of Three Paces' is *traivikramambu agu* or Vāmana (cf. Note IV.24). 'like banyan berries' is *maṟṟi-paṇḍula vaḍupu-gala,* and 'shell of a baby turtle' is *kodama tābeḷḷa meḷḷa*. 'prophesising his tortoise birth' is *bhāvi nija kamaṭha avatāra sūcakambu*, literally 'hinting at his future descent as a tortoise'. The *kūrma avatāra* is technically 'earlier' than the Vāmana *avatāra*, but this kind of statement only furthers the idea that linear time is of no significance here.

The 'signs from his life', *aṅkitambulu,* are not clear- neither VVS nor TKR offer explanations. 'three troubles of life' is *tāpa-traya* (cf. Note I.73).

'Primordial Progenitor' is *purāṇa-puruṣu,* and 'Ultimate Man' is *puruṣa-uttamu*. For 'Saviour of Vibhīṣaṇa', *vībhīṣaṇa-varadu,* see Note VI.99. 'Father of Love' is *anaṅga-janaku*, a

reference to Kāma's birth as Pradyumna, the son of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇi. 'Lover of Śrīraṅgam' is *raṅga-ramaṇu*.

For 'Jaya! Jaya!', see Note IV.16. Also compare the praise of the Lord in the following section to the *daśāvatāra-stotra* in Chapter IV.

VI.99 This short *teṭagīti padyam* is a summary of the legend of Śrīraṅgam's founding. The idol is believed to have risen from the primordial ocean through *tapas* performed by Lord Brahma. From the 'Creator's Abode', *vidhi-gṛha,* it was appointed to Sūrya the sun god and later taken to Ayodhya by the famous King Ikṣvāku, first of the Solar Kings and ancestor of Lord Rāma *(īkṣvāku*). During the epic war in Laṅka, Rāma was assisted by the *asura* Vibhīṣaṇa who was a great Viṣṇu *bhakta*. Although he is the brother of Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa is mentioned here as *dhana-pati-bhrātṛ*, 'brother to Kubera, Lord of Treasures' because he, along with Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa and Śūrpaṇakha were all children of the sage Viśravas.

In honour of Vibhīṣaṇa's service, Rāma invited him to Ayodhya for his coronation ceremony and presented him with the idol of Raṅganātha. When Vibhīṣaṇa journeyed back to Laṅka, carrying the idol on his head, he stopped along the Kāveri for some rest and placed the idol down on a sandy bank. To his great surprise, the image became fixed to that spot. Raṅganātha explained that he wished to remain there forever, beside the sacred Kāveri River, but assured Vibhīṣaṇa that he would always face south towards Laṅka. To this day, the idol of Śrīraṅgam faces south and worshippers must enter the seven enclosures from the southern gates.

VI.100 The poems in this praise section (VI.100-104) are markedly different than those found elsewhere in the text. Here the emphasis is on the metaphysical (cf. III.10-13) rather than the iconic (cf. I.12, IV.11, IV.16-31). This variability relates to the Śrī Vaiṣṇava concept of *pañca-tattvam*, the five forms of god, *viz. para* (transcendental), *vyūha* (emanation), *vibhava* (incarnation or *avatāra*), *antaryāmi* (inner being) and *arca* (idol). 'Infinite, Indivisible and Invisible' is *anantun aprakāśun abhedyun*.

VI.101 Here there are two derivational meanings for the name Nārāyaṇa; *nārāyaṇa* = *nāra* + *ayana* where *nāra* can mean either 'human' or 'water', and *ayana* can mean 'going', 'moving', 'path', 'abode', or 'place of resort'.

'Aggregate Substances' is *vastu-vitati,* and 'Heaven and Earth' is a translation of *bhū prabhṛtika,* literally 'the Earth, etc.', a referece to the 25 *tattvas* or elemental realities, beginning with the Earth, that are enumerated by the Sāṁkhya school of philosophy.

'the Venerable, the Lofty, the Ultimate Man' is a beautiful mix of Telugu and Sanskrit- *pĕmpāru gariṣṭhata gala para-puruṣu*.

VI.102 This verse makes reference to the Hindu Trinity– Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva- who are respectively belived to create (*prabhaviñcu*), preserve (*vartiñcu*) and destroy (*ḍindu*) the universe (cf. Note IV.23). 'the Great Light' is *mahun*, from the Sanskrit *mahas* meaning 'light'.

VI.103 The 'Three Qualifying Colors' are the *tri-guṇas*, referred to here as *sattva-ādi guṇamulu* (cf. Note IV.23). The 'Collective Senses', *indriya-vitati,* are ten in number- divided into the five *jñāna-indriyas,* sometimes called *buddhi-indriyas* or Organs of Perception, i.e. *śrotra* (ears), *tvak* (skin), *cakṣuṣi* (eyes), *jihva* (tongue), *nāsika* (nose); and the five *karma-indriyas* or Organs of Action, i.e. *pāyu* (anus), *upastha* (genitals), *hasta* (hands), *pāda* (feet) and *vāk* (mouth). To this list the Vedāntins add the four internal organs (cf. Note V.55).

The *jñānendriyas* relate to the five senses of hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell, which are often respectively identified with the the five constituent elements or *pañca-bhūtālu*, *viz. ākaśa* (ether), *vāyu* (air), *agni* (fire), *jala* (water) and *pṛthivi* (earth), and thus 'Source of the Primal Elements', *sarva-bhūtamulu kaṇṭĕ ādyuḍu*.

'hours to minutes, to the blink of an eye. . . thread of time' is *kaḷā-kāṣṭhā-nimeṣa-ādi kāla-sūtra*. A *kaḷa* is a measure of time equal to 30 *kāṣṭhas*, with one *kāṣṭha* being equivalent to 18 *nimeṣas* or blinks.

RAṄGANĀTHA

VI.104 'divine actions' is *līlalan* (cf. Note II.91). 'Ultimate Inner Image' is *para-sva-rūpa,* and 'Perfect Emanation of Self-Manifested Light' is *bhavya divya-avatāra*, glossed by TKR 675 as *śreṣṭhamaina tananta tānai janmiñcedi avatāram*.

VI.105 This poem that describes the romantic thoughts of Raṅganātha is written in almost pure Telugu. Like other *sīsa padyams* (in particular cf. II.30), this verse employs a repated phrase *kānĕkā kaligĕ* meaning 'this must be why'. Here the metaphors harkens back to the decription of Goda's beauty in Chapter V and are intentionally subtle, and not so readily obvious.

Lakṣmi's son (*siri-paṭṭi*) is Manmatha, the God of Love whose flag is decorated with the image of a *makara* or *karka*, variously identified as a crocodile, dolphin or crab, or in this case a silver fish or carp (Tel *beḍisa*) that Goda's eyes resemble.

Goda's waist is as slender as a sprouting vine (Tel *tīga*), one that is only found in the Spring, here identified as *caitruna* from the Indian lunar month that corresponds to March or April.

Rati's *vīṇa* or lute (*kinnĕra*) is made from two gourds which Goda's breasts resemble. Saraswati (Vāṇi) resides in a lotus and has a swan as her vehicle (*vāhana*). The swan has apparently found a nest (*kulāyambu*) in Goda's face, which resembles a blooming lotus.

Goda's black curls (*pĕn-nĕṟu*) are like dark rain clouds that signal the time for peacocks to mate, and her feet are like lotuses that attract bees in search of honey. The flowers mentioned here are dry land *mĕṭṭa-tāmaralu*, a play on the word *meṭṭu*, meaning 'step'.

VI.106 'eager' is the verb *uvviḷūri*, literally 'to water at the mouth'. 'illusion, a woman in her image' is *māya-vadūṭi aṭlu,* an idea that may be based on the *māyā-sīta* or Illusionary Sīta in the *Ādhyātma Rāmāyanam* (TKR 678). This short poem represents Goda's apotheosis, the exact moment when she is merged with God. In fact, it is the climax of the entire work, everything that follows is resolution.

VI.107 'holy water blessed by the Lord's feet along with a sacred cloth reserved for special devotees' is a descriptive translation of *pāda-tīrtha-prasāda-pariveṣṭanambulu*. Palanquins (*pālakis*) usually have a window for passengers to look out through; here there seems to be a window with bars covered with a cloth, intimated by the phrase *pañjarambu aḍaliñci*, and glossed by TKR 678 as *pallaki tĕranu tŏlagiñci*.

VI.108 'Save me!' is a translation of the exclamation *abrahmaṇyamu,* which TKR 678 glosses as *mosam* (Fraud!), and *campakumani pĕṭṭe mŏra* (a cry of 'Don't kill me!'). Brown 40 explains it as 'an unbrahminical or sacrilegious act; an exclamation meaning 'to the rescue! a heinous sin is

about to be committed!' crying for quarter'. Viṣṇucitta's dialogue here is impulsive and emotional, functioning like a brief *nindā-stuti* (cf. Note V.40).

VI.110 *vāsavuḍu* is identified by VVS 536 as *devendruḍu* or Lord Indra, king of the gods. 'out of control' is *nir-aṅkuśuṇḍu*, literally 'one without a goad'. 'Mother Compassion' is the goddess Lakṣmi, *dayā-nidhi amma*.

VI.111 'pure, innocent Goda' is *nĕṭṭika sīla*; 'a well-behaved person' says Brown 413, although the phrase seems to have more religious overtones. It may be derived from *naiṣṭhika-śāla*, literally 'hall of faith'. For more information on this interesting term, see VVS 536 and TKR 681.

'What's that smirk?' is a translation of the caustic phrase, *vinta cūpa pĕṭṭidi*. 'Who can make right the crooked flow of rivers?' is the Telugu proverb, *diddun evvaḍu ilan eṟula vaṅkalu vāri ḍŏṅkalun*.

VI.112 The term used for Viṣṇucitta is *dharaṇī-suruṇḍu*, a brahman, literally 'a god upon the earth'. 'mirror-like cheeks' is *gaṇḍa-darpaṇambulu*.

VI.113 Again the Lord's diction is filled with highly colloquial Telugu phrases. 'O wise sage, have you lost your mind from old age?' is *mudi madi tappitoṭu muni mukhya,* and 'attacked me with abuse' is *dūru dūrĕdu*.

VI.114 'O, my father! What's done is done.' is a literal translation of *nā taṇḍri āyĕne āyanu*. VVS 537 offers a variant reading. 'Speak from within' is *kaḍupu paliki*. 'May you be victorious!' is the phrase *vijayivi kammu*. Brown 152 defines *kammu* as 'the singular imperative of *agu* to become. Be thou; become thou.'

VI.115 This beautiful poem is written in the Āṭavĕladi meter, rarely used in this text. 'ran out' has been added.

THE WEDDING

VI.116 The remainder of the epic poem depicts the wedding of Goda and Raṅganātha. It seems to be based on the sixth chapter of Āṇḍāḷ's *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* which begins with *vāraṇam āyiram*, literally 'a thousand elephants', describing Goda's fantastical dream in which she marries the Lord.

VI.117 Compare this hospitality (*ātithyambu*) to Viṣṇucitta's actions at the end of Chapter I.

VI.118 'his daughter Śrī' has been added for clarity. Lakṣmi was born from the Ocean of Milk (*payodhi*), but she is also considered the daughter of the sage Bhṛgu. Legend says that he gave her away as a bride to Lord Viṣṇu. The reference appears to be based on Chapter VIII of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, a section that answers the question of Bhṛgu's fatherhood and contains a beautiful passage about the inseparability of Lakṣmi and Viṣṇu.

'If that was right, then there's no injustice here', *iṭe anyāyambe,* may be in reference to the fact that Viṣṇucitta is technically Goda's foster father.

VI.119 'Easy-going people' is *culkani narulu*, literally 'light/easy men'.

VI.120 'His great lordship makes him the Ultimate Sovereign' is *prabhuta parama-īśvaruṇḍu aina*. For Śūra, see Note IV.17. 'For it is he who creates the costumes. . .' is *tānĕ kaṭṭina bhūmika dālcu māku ghanata idi mammu ceyuṭa tanadu ghanata*. Although this statement is in reference to Viṣṇucitta alone, I have translated it as a universal. The plural pronouns *māku* and *mammu* are actually honorific plurals used for a father-in-law, corroborated by VVS 539 (*śvaśura)* and TKR 685 (*māma-gāri aina māku)*. The feeling here is resonant with Viṣṇucitta's sentiments at the end of poem II.91 (see also Note II.91).

VI.121 'singing songs' has been added.

VI.122 'highway of stars' is *uḍu-vīthi*. 'troops' is the medieval Hindi-Urdu word(?) *pauju* or *pavuju* (see Brown 502). The word *śata-kōṭi* is used twice in succession to mean 'thunderbolt' as well as 'a hundred million'.

VI.123 This rich *vacanam* describes the procession of the groom and his wedding party to the bride's home (*vadhū-gṛha-āgamana*), commonly known today as the *barāt*. 'perfectly spaced guesthouses' is *viḍidi-paṭṭu viḍisi*. 'Water Bearers' are *dhārā-dharambulu,* i.e. clouds. 'white like titanium' is *kaladhauta dhavaḷa*. 'He was a living ornament' is a translation of *bhūṣā-vibhūṣituḍu*.

VI.124 The next six poems (VI.124-129) describe the adornment of the bride (*pĕḷḷi kūturu ceyaṭam*). Even today, it is a common Andhra tradition for women to gather before the wedding day and sing songs about Sīta and Rāma's marriage. In North India this function is known as the *saṅgīt*.

VI.126 'marriage rites' are *vaivāhika-dīkṣa*, glossed by TKR 688 as *vivāham annadi ŏka kratuvu* (sacrifice) *kanuka dāni kanuvaina dīkṣa* (ritual), which relates to the religious nature of a traditional Indian wedding. 'Queen of the World went from woman to goddess' is *jagat-īśvariki*

velpu abala ortu. TKR 688 notes that the description given here is the traditional *abhiṣekam* or ablution performed for the idol of the goddess.

VI.128 This *sīsa padyam* employs various words for woman or friend (Tel *ativa*, *paḍat*i, *věladi*, etc.), and the repeated word *ortu,* meaning 'one.' The repetition builds excitement and conveys how all of Goda's friends want a hand in decorating the bride to be.

For 'lac water', see Note V.34. Toerings (*měṭṭělu*) are special ornaments for married women. The reference to *něṟika*, a petticoat worn as an undergarment, has been omitted. 'wedding band' is *kaṭakamulu* (cf. VI.134). *sīmanta vīthi cercukka*, a jewel worn at the part of the hair, is an important adornment for brides.

VI.129 'chaplet' is a translation of *lalāmakamu*, variously identified as a *cercukka* (VVS 543, cf. Note VI.128), *bāsikam* (TKR 690, cf. Note I.53, V.20), 'a coronet of flowers' (Brown 664) and 'a chaplet or wreath of flowers worn on the forehead' (Monier-Williams 898, Apte 813).

VI.130 'auspicious moment' is *lagnam* (also *muhūrtam* or *su-muhūrtam*), a precise, astrologically determined time for a Hindu wedding to take place (cf. VI.131). 'twelve holy flames', *paṇḍrěṇḍunu diviyalai,* refers to the twelve Āḻvārs (cf. I.10). 'Lord of Rivers' is *sindhu-pati*, i.e. the ocean.

'Nature' is *prakṛti*, a reference to the Vedāntic concept of *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* as male and female energies. 'God of Fire' is Agni and 'God of Rain' is Parjanyuṇḍu, i.e. Indra.

'ancient verses' is *prācīna pāṭhambulu,* and 'royal chronicles' is *biruda prabandhambulu*, glossed by TKR 691 as *rājugāri caritra kaivārālu*. The sage Nārada (*vidhi-nandana*), along with Sananda, Sanaka Sanātana and Sanatkumāra are said to have been born from the mind of Lord Brahma.

The comparison of Garuḍa to a wild elephant, *vihaṅga puṅgavuṇḍu matta-mātaṅgambai,* may be a reference to an old South Indian practice of the groom arriving at the wedding on an elephant, similar to the present-day North Indian custom of riding in on a horse. 'supernatural procession' is *a-prākṛta vaibhavambunam jani.*

According to tradition, anyone entering an Indian home is offered water to wash their feet. The discarded water (*āmukta,* if you will) is normally disposed of, but here it becomes consecrated holy water (cf. *tīrtham* Note V.94). 'Me first' is *aham-pūrvikan*.

The 'sixteen different ways', *ṣoḍaśa upacāras,* are offerings reserved only for god; they are as follows- *āvāhana/dhyānam* (meditation), *āsanam* (seat), *pādyam* (water for washing feet), *arghyam* (water for washing hands), *ācamanam* (water for sipping), *snānam* (bath), *vastram* (clothes), *yajña-upavīta* (sacred thread), *gandham* (sandalwood paste), *puṣpam* (flowers), *dhūpam* (incense), *dīpam* (lights), *naivedyam* (food), *tāmbūlam* (betel nut), *nīrājanam* (camphor) and *mantra-puṣpam* (hymns).

madhu-parkambu, glossed by TKR 692 as *běllam kalipina pěrugu*', a mixture of yogurt and brown sugar', is a traditional offering made by the father of the bride to the groom. Apte 737 adds '"a mixture of honey", a respectful offering made to a guest or to the bridegroom on his arrival at the door of the father of the bride; its usual ingredients are five: *dadhi* [yogurt], *sarpi* [ghee], *jalam* [water], *kṣaudram* [honey] and *sitā* [sugar].' My thanks to Professor P. Ramanarasimham and Dr. G. Indira for their helpful assistance with this prose passage.

VI.131 The *pĕn-tĕra* which I have translated as 'long cloth'/'veil', is a cloth curtain held between the bride and the groom during the wedding ceremony. 'Between the couple' has been added for clarity. For 'auspicious moment', see Note VI.130.

'jaggery sweetened cumin', *guḍa jīrakambulu,* is said to repesent the bitter-sweet nature of life.

VI.132-133 These two poems are based on that part of the wedding ceremony when the bride and groom pour raw rice (*sesa-prālu*), or in this case, pearls (*muttĕpu-prālu*), over each other's heads.

VI.134 'wedding necklace' is *maṅgaḷa-sūtram,* and 'wedding bands' is *kaṅkaṇambulu* (cf. Note VI.128).

VI.135 'altar of fire was made with dried out grains', *lājulu velpiñci,* is a reference to the traditional fire of Vedic rituals (*homam*).

The Seven Steps or *sapta-padi* are a critical part of the wedding ceremony wherein the couple walks around the fire and takes their solemn vows. Later, the groom points to the star of Arundhati in the Pleiades, as well as the Pole Star or North Star known as Dhruva. Arundhati, the wife of the great sage Vaśiṣṭha, is the epitome of an ideal wife, and Dhruva, meaning 'fixed' or 'firm', is a prince who attained heaven due to his love and devotion. Both these figures represent the ideals that the married couple should emulate. 'Constellation Formed of the Seven Sages' has been added (cf. Note II.16).

'And though he ruled the universe. . .' is a free translation of *kantu sāmrājyam eliñci karuṇa cittamu ŏlayu jagamulu pāliñcucu unnavāḍu.*

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APPENDIX I

INDEX OF ALL VERSES

	Verses	Count	
Prolugue			**50**
Invocation	I.1 - I.10	10	
King's Dream	1.11 - 1.18	8	
Vaṁśa Stuti	1.19 - I.50	(32)	
Chapter I			**39**
Śrī Villiputtūr	I.51 - I.76	26	
Viṣṇuucitta	I.77 - I.85	9	
Āśvāsāntam	I.86 - I.89	(4)	
Chapter II			**101**
Madhura	II.1 - II.38	34 (4)	
Pāṇḍya King	II.39 - II.44	6	
Summer	II.45 - II.70	26	
King's Dilemna	II.71 - II.83	13	
The Contest	II.84 - II.97	14	
Āśvāsāntam	II.98 - II.101	(4)	
Chapter III			**93**
The Debate	III.1 - III.13	13	
Khāṇḍikya & Keśidwaja	III.14 - III.65	(52)	
Avidya Discourses	III.66 - III.89	(24)	
Āśvāsāntam	III.90 - III.93	(4)	
Chapter IV			**289**
Viṣṇucitta's Victory	IV.1 - IV.8	8	
Victory Procession	IV.9 - IV.15	7	
Daśāvatāra Stotram	IV.16 - IV.33	18	
Procession to Śrī Villiputtūr	IV.34 - IV.37	(4)	
Yāmunācarya Caritra	IV.38 - IV.75	(38)	
Monsoon	IV.76 - IV.136	(61)	
Autumn	IV.137 - IV.183	(47)	

Yāmunācarya & Raṅganātha	IV.184 - IV.203	(20)
Rāja Dharma	IV.204 - IV.285	(82)
Āśvāsāntam	IV.286 - IV.289	(4)

CHAPTER V **161**

Finding Goda	V.1 - V.6	6
Goda's Beauty	V.7 - V.36	30
Nindā Stuti	V.37 - V.54	18
Goda & Friends	V.55 - V.87	33
Tiruppāvai	V.88 - V.95	8
Spring	V.96 - V.144	(49)
Longing in Separation	V.145 - V.157	(13)
Āśvāsāntam	V.158 - V.161	(4)

CHAPTER VI **140**

Introduction	VI.1 - VI.2	2
Māladāsari Katha	VI.3 - VI.65	(63)
Soma Śarma Katha	VI.66 -VI.89	(24)
Śrīraṅgam	VI.90 - VI.97	8
Raṅganātha	VI.98 - VI.115	18
Engagement	VI.116 - V.122	7
Kaḷyānam	VI.123 - VI.135	13
Āśvāsāntam	VI.136 - V.140	(5)

TOTALS (538) + 335 = **873**

APPENDIX II

INDEX OF SELECTED VERSES

Rāja Dharma and Vamśa Stuti

Gov	General Governance
For	Foreign Policy
Eco	Economic Policy
Rel	Religious Activity
Bod	Bod of the King
Bra	Brahmins
Off	Officers
Tri	Tribals
Int	Intelligence
Dom	Domestic Policy

Verse Number		
204	Protect subjects	Gov
205	Protect subjects	Gov
206	Enforcement of commands, tribal example	Gov
207	Entrust forts to Brahmins	Bras, Mil
208	Never demote	Gov
209	Qualities of bad subordinates (Brahmins)	Bras, Off
210	Unrighteous Brahmins	Bras
211	Qualities of good minister – Timmarasu	Min
212-3	Qualities of bad Min	Min
214	Meting out of duties, need strong staffed	Gov
215	Cooperation of officers, honesty	Off
216	Importance of good leadership	Gov
217	Brahmins as fort commanders	Bra
218	Officers of temples	Rel
219	Foreign affairs and borders, then domestic	For
220	Treatment of informants	Int
221	Tribals and fallen heroes	Tri
222	Destroy the fears of Tribals	Tri
223	Tribal with a bow?	Tri
224	Honesty of Tribals	Tri

225	Tribal truthfulness, to others give rewards	Tri
226	Horse and elephant care	Mil
227	Advice given at councils	Gov
228-9	Bad Ministers – honesty, promises	Min
230	Able new officers	Off
231	Bringing in a new minister to destroy the old	Min
232	King as scholar and hero	Gov, Min
233	Trust no one	Gov
234	Detecting bad character from a single incident	Gov
235	Don't destroy enemies, humble them, mercy	For
236	Large empires – Build tanks, help farmers	Dom
237	Officers must care for the conquered	Off
238	The division of wealth into fourths	Eco
239	Punishing guards and others wisely	Gov
240	Keep friends as informants, do not over punish	Int
241	One eye open like a sloth bear	For
242	Show bhakti, don't give wealth to ascetics	Rel
243	Three pleas for mercy, execute criminals	Gov
244	King's heroism reflected in officers	Off
245	Ports, foreigners, horses, maintain trade	Eco
246	Punish offenders at the opportune time	Gov cf. 274
247	Strategy towards weak and strong kingdoms	For
248	Bad governance, be friendly with officers	Gov, Off
249	Befriend internal enemies	Dom
250	Investigate enemies in conquered lands	For
251	Do no be overbearing with weak enemies	For
252	Qualities of a bad king	Gov
253	Dispel omens with religious rites	Rel
254	Instill competition amongst subordinates	Gov, Off
255	Send generals for invasions, Brahmans	Mil, Bra
256	Forest clearing	Eco
257	Treatment and recruitment of tribals	Tri
258	Treatment of foreign merchants	Eco
259	Conduct before foreign ambassadors	For
260	Never divulge secrets to new officers	Off
261	Brahmans fort commanders	Bra
262	Imperial budget	Eco
263	Never make oaths regarding enemies	For
264	Military tactics, battle strategy, weapons	Mil
265	Monitor counselors with spies	Int
266	Weak enemy conquer, strong enemy befriend	For

267	Enemy forts, harems, ambassadors	For
268	Do not enter haunted territory	For
269	Behavior of false councilors	Off
270	Duties of the king, body of the king	Gov, Bod
271	The king's daily schedule	Bod
272-3	Three kinds of officers	Gov
274	Reward accolades at the right time	Gov cf. 246
275	Honor one's ancestors	Rel
276	Expatiating the sins of empire	Rel cf. 284
277	Fear of the king keeps the social order	Gov, Bod
278	The hypocrisy of societal roles	Gov
279	Qualities of good spies	Int
280	King gains merit by giving, not renunciation	Bod
281	Imperial dinner	Bod
282	Dharma above other goals of life	Gov
283	Imperial jewelry	Bod
284	Empire is not sin	Gov cf. 276
285	The Dharmic King	Gov

Tuḷuva Vaṁśa Stuti

Verse Number	*Manu Caritramu*	
I.19	MC I.18	
I.20	MC I.19	
I.21	MC I.20	
I.22	MC I.21	
I.23	MC I.22	
I.24	MC I.23	
I.25	MC I.24	
I.26	MC I.25	
I.27	MC I.26	
I.28	MC I.27	
I.29	MC I.28	
I.30	MC I.30	MC I.29 not in AM; MC I.30 some variation
I.31	MC I.31	ultimate line variation
I.32	MC I.32	
I.33	MC I.33	lines 2-4 variation

Krishna Raya Stuti

I.34	MC I.34	ultimate line variation
I.35	+++	MC I.35 & I.36 not in AM
I.36	MC I.37	ultimate line variation
I.37	+++	
I.38	+++	
I.39	+++	cf. MC I.38
I.40	MC I.39	
I.41	+++	
I.42	+++	
I.43	+++	

APPENDIX III

TELUGU PROSODY

GAṆA SYSTEMS

	Gaṇa	Mātra	Akṣara
Trika			
ya	∪ — —	5	3
ma	— — —	6	3
ta	— — ∪	5	3
ra	— ∪ —	5	3
ja	∪ — ∪	4	3
bha	— ∪ ∪	4	3
na	∪ ∪ ∪	3	3
sa	∪ ∪ —	4	3
Indra			
na-la	∪ ∪ ∪ ∪	4	4
na-ga	∪ ∪ ∪ —	5	4
sa-la	∪ ∪ — ∪	5	4
bha	— ∪ ∪	4	3
ra	— ∪ —	5	3
ta	— — ∪	5	
Sūrya			
na	∪ ∪ ∪	3	3
ha	— ∪	3	2

Catur-Mātra			
na-la	◡ ◡ ◡ ◡	4	4
sa	◡ ◡ —	4	3
ja	◡ — ◡	4	3
bha	— ◡ ◡	4	3
ga-ga	— —	4	2

Trika mnemonic: ya-mā-tā-rā-ja-bhā-na-sa

SANSKRIT METERS

Chandas	Scan	Akṣaras	Yati
Śārdūlam	— — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ — ; — — ∪ — — ∪ —		
	ma-sa-ja-sa-ta-ta-ga	19	13
Mattebham	∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ — ; — — ∪ — — ∪ —		
	sa-bha-ra-na-ma-ya-va	20	14
Utpalamāla	— ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ ; — ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ —		
	bha-ra-na-bha-bha-ra-va	20	10
Campakamāla	∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ ; — ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ —		
	na-ja-bha-ja-ja-ja-ra	21	11

TELEGU METERS

Chandas	Scan	Gaṇas
Tetagīti	every *pāda*	1 Sūrya + 2 Indra + 2 Sūrya
Āṭavĕlaḍi	odd *pāda*	3 Sūrya + 2 Indra
	even *pāda*	5 Sūrya
Sīsa	first four *pādas*	6 Indra + 2 Sūrya
	+ one Tetagīti or Āṭavĕlaḍi *padyam*	
Kanda	odd *pāda*	3 Catur-Mātra
	even *pāda*	5 Catur-Mātra